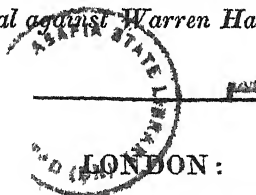


A SHORT
Memoir of the Life,
OF THE LATE
RIGHT HONOURABLE
Richard Brinsley Sheridan,
BEING
AN ATTEMPT TO DRAW A TRUE ESTIMATE OF HIS
CHARACTER AS IT MAY REGARD POSTERITY.

TO WHICH IS ADDED ..
A REPORT OF HIS
CELEBRATED SPEECH

DELIVERED ON THE FOLLOWING DAYS IN
Westminster Hall,
JUNE 3d, 6th, 10th, & 13th, 1788,

ON HIS
*Summing up the Evidence on the Begum Charge, in
the Trial against Warren Hastings, Esq.*



SOLD BY J. BOOTH, DUKE STREET, PORTLAND PLACE;
T. EGERTON, WHITEHALL;
AND
MESSRS. HOOKHAM, OLD BOND STREET.

(Price Five Shillings.)
1816.

MEMOIR
OF
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN.

WHEN the life and character of an eminent man in our own time is to be recorded, we find difficulties arising from the very circumstance which ought undoubtedly to render the subject comparatively easy ; namely, our proximity in point of time ; for those persons, who alone from their intimate acquaintance during life, can inform us of the real merits of his character, are induced by friendship, gratitude, pique, prejudice, and a thousand other motives, to extol, or suppress his good qualities, to magnify or conceal his defects, and not unfrequently to give

a colouring entirely fictitious to many parts of his character. Thus it is in some respects with Mr. Sheridan, whose moral character, which admits not perhaps of encomium or censure in any high degree, is praised or blamed according to the different prejudices which operate upon the mind of the narrator. Years alone can remove this film of prejudice from our eyes, and present a perfectly correct and impartial view of this great man to those who are to succeed us : but in the mean while something must be done to satisfy the curiosity of the public, which will not wait for the silent operations of time ; it is the part, therefore, of any one, who wishes to discharge the duty of a biographer, having first divested his mind of all partiality, to state correctly what he knows upon his own authority, and where this fails him, to have recourse to the best accounts that are to be found among his contemporaries, and by comparing and contrasting these in his own mind, to offer to the

public notice such a memoir as may be consistent with truth, and agreeable to the other useful and excellent purposes of biography. With this view the present sketch of Mr. Sheridan's life is undertaken. It should be ever borne in mind, however different the opinions may be concerning some points in his character, that there are others which admit of no variety of opinion, that there were some shining qualities, the source of amusement and delight to those who knew him, which they will ever cherish with affection, though they must now remember with regret; and also, that there are remembrancers of him left behind, which speak for themselves, and require not, though they might command, the concurrent testimony of all his contemporaries in their favour. His Works, the light and glory of our drama, will receive no doubt, from the hand of posterity, the most profuse and flattering approbation ; yet, not

more than the present age has been delighted to pay.

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN was the third son of Mr. Thomas Sheridan, an eminent actor, a lecturer on elocution, and one who has left behind him, if not any productions of a very high order of excellence, at least some very useful and creditable works. His mother, Mrs. Frances Sheridan, was a lady of considerable talent, and all accounts agree in stating her to have been a very interesting and amiable woman. Her maiden name was Chamberlaine, and she was a granddaughter of Sir Thomas Chamberlaine. She wrote the well-known and admired novel, called, "Sydney Biddulph,"* and two comedies, "The Discovery," and "The Dupe." Thus it appears that Mr. Sheridan was sprung from a truly literary stock, which he

* From an incident in this novel it is probable that Mr. Sheridan took the hint of Sir Oliver's return in the "School for Scandal."

was destined to adorn and distinguish by his own superior genius. Richard Brinsley was born in Dorset Street, Dublin, in October 1751. Having been placed first of all in private tuition with his elder brother Charles Francis, late Secretary at War, in Ireland, under the care of Mr. Samuel Whyte, of Dublin; they were sent by that gentleman, after a residence of eighteen months, to their parents at Windsor, and Richard Brinsley was placed in his eleventh or twelfth year, at Harrow School. He does not appear to have evinced any extraordinary talents or early ambition at school; and it was not till within a short time of his leaving Harrow, that a retentive memory, a sound judgment, and a powerful comprehension began to display themselves with any effect, and to conquer that unaccountable propensity to indolence, which characterized his youthful days, and which was never completely surmounted.*

* To recount all the facetious and witty sayings of Mr. Sheridan.

He was a classical scholar for the purposes of enlarging his knowledge, and improving his taste, the only true end and aim of classical acquirements ; but he did not feel that pedantic attachment to the learned languages which too often distracts the attention from better pursuits, and gives to a comparatively useless and cumbersome branch of education, the monopoly of time, talents, and attention. Upon leaving Harrow, he was entered of the Middle Temple. The next step of importance in the life of Mr. Sheridan, was his marriage with Miss Linley ; and to some it appears strange, that from the period of his

would exceed the limits of this preface ;—to enumerate all that are attributed to him would fill the press ;—but there is an anecdote of his boyish day's, which the writer knows to be true, and which shows at once his readiness and his good-nature. The boys were joking each other, as was common enough among them, upon the subject of their fathers, and their various situations in life. One of them, whose father was a physician, taunted young Sheridan with the circumstance of his father being a player. “ Ah !” replied he, “ your father kills people, mine amuses and delights them.”

entry at the Middle Temple, till his marriage, nothing should have occurred in his life worthy of remark, for he certainly was not at this time the votary of fashion or dissipation. But retirement is not always obscurity, and of the lives of those who are destined to enlighten the world by the effects of their literary attainments, it is necessary that a certain portion should be spent in study and meditation, to entitle themselves to the bright reward that is to follow. If the facts were not so established, the nature of the case proves that it cannot be otherwise. Mr. Sheridan was in this interval extending his acquaintance among men of learning, improving his powers of argument, and enriching his mind with the stores of English literature, his favourite and most successful study. This period was in him the dawn of eloquence, wit, and taste, and perhaps there never was any man who drew such vast supplies of them all from such narrow sources, and in so short a time. In

first, Mr. Sheridan was victorious, and it was in consequence of his asserting the victory, which he certainly had a just right to claim, that they met a second time. Upon this latter occasion they were both wounded, and fought desperately, till parted by the intervention of the seconds. The world at that time felt only such partial interest and temporary anxiety concerning the event of these duels, as would be always excited in events of this nature, when gallantry and courage are engaged in the cause of beauty ; nor could any one anticipate how much excellence was at stake, or how great a loss they had nearly sustained ; but Miss L. suffered not a long time to elapse before she rewarded her champion for his exertions in her behalf. They travelled together to the Continent, where they were married, and the ceremony was again performed upon their return to this country, after which the lady never again appeared as a public performer. Such are the particulars of this memo-

rable incident in the life of Mr. Sheridan ; an event, such as seldom occurs in the life of an ordinary man in these days, though frequent in the pages of a novel, and than which none could have been a more effectual trial and proof of his spirit, his courage, and his gallantry.

The few following years of Mr. Sheridan's life, were devoted to the prosecution of his powers as a dramatic writer, impelled thereto, as it should seem by necessity ; for it is generally believed, that dissatisfied with some early comic sketches he had drawn, he laid them aside in disgust, and renounced for the time all hopes of success in this department of literature. The utmost efforts of Mr. Sheridan's pen hitherto amounted only to some light effusions in poetry, which would not of themselves have acquired for him the reputation he has since deservedly attained, and some trivial share in the fleeting productions of the day. But his altered mode of

life demanded an increased establishment, and the cares of a family which were now commencing, impelled him forcibly to further exertion, and he was too sensible of the important duties of life to allow the powers of his mind, to remain any longer in inactivity, they being his only refuge against poverty and distress. Pecuniary distress is too often the portion of genius. This it was that roused the nervous and prolific genius of Dryden, and kept it continually in action. This it was that called forth the rugged but forcible powers of Savage ; and to this we are partially indebted for the exertions of the great man whose life we are now contemplating. Had Sheridan enjoyed a competency, it is possible, considering the characteristic indolence of his mind, that he might have contented himself with the occasional sallies of a poetical fancy, suggested by the occurrences of the moment, and recommending themselves by the ease and beauty which would be natural to him in

such attempts. He might have been a writer without system, without arrangement, and a servant of the Muses only for the purposes of amusement, and the diversions of fancy. But the powers of Mr. Sheridan were not doomed to languish for want of excitement. He had a young wife to support, and the wants of a family to prepare for. Actuated by such views, he commenced his dramatic career. The Comedy of "the Rivals" was performed at Covent Garden Theatre on the 17th of January, 1775, and in the same year "St. Patrick's Day, or the Scheming Lieutenant," a piece of less importance, though fully answering the end it had in view, the excitement of broad laughter and humorous diversion. The following year appeared, "The Duenna," which had a run of seventy-five nights during the season. The "School for Scandal," appeared on the 8th of May, 1777, preceded a short time before by the "Trip to Scarborough, altered from Vanburgh's Comedy of "The Relapse."

“The Camp” was performed in the following season, and his next principal dramatic work, “The Critic,” did not appear till the 30th of October, 1778. His last Dramatic Work, “Pizarro,” translated, or rather paraphrased from Kotzebue, did not make its appearance till the year 1799. These are his Dramatic Works, whose excellencies speak for themselves, and are so well known, and so generally admired as to make any commentary upon them unnecessary—so may they long remain—and so they probably will, till the genius of our language is so far forgotten as to be spoiled with impunity. The best testimony that can be given in favour of their superior excellence is, that they almost all of them keep their turn upon the stage. They are fresh in the memory of us all. The public, the arbitrary judges of dramatic merit, who are allowed to change their minds whenever, and as often as they please, have never exerted their privilege with regard to

this Author ; and the actor after his nightly labours, feels it a refreshment and a delight to repose upon the beauties of “ The Rivals,” and “ The School for Scandal.” To this latter Comedy, it has been objected, and perhaps with reason, that the improvement of the heart, and the advancement of morality have not been sufficiently attended to by the author, that the audience are ever too much amused with the ludicrous situations in which Vice and Hypocrisy are placed, severely to appreciate and condemn the consequences that arise from them. This is certainly an objection, and it must ever be regretted, that in the very best comedy our nation can boast, the force of the satire is lost by being linked with unseasonable drollery. Mr. Sheridan was 26 years old, when he produced this comedy, too early an age, it must be confessed, for the exercise, much less for the inculcation, of severe moral discipline. This is some excuse for the author ; it is none, how-

ever, for the piece, which, as a national work must ever carry with it, among innumerable beauties, the evidence of one great imperfection. To return to the order of Mr. Sheridan's life. In 1779, the year after he brought out the Critic, his Monody to the Memory of Mr. Garrick was recited at Drury Lane Theatre. It is a poem containing fine thoughts and harmonious numbers, and worthy of the author. Mr. Sheridan's pecuniary embarrassments had increased considerably, he having obtained an interest in the patent of Drury Lane Theatre, estimated at £30,000.

About this time (1779) Mr. Sheridan felt an anxious desire to make the House of Commons the Theatre of his eloquence, and had been endeavouring to qualify himself for a Public Speaker by all the means in his power. It is believed, that an application was made without success to the Duke of *Portland*, then a leader in opposition, to give Mr. Sheridan a seat

in Parliament for one of his boroughs. However that may be, a general election took place in 1780, and Mr. Sheridan determined to canvass for himself, and directed his views towards the town of Stafford. Some difficulties occurred, not arising from any interested conduct or illiberal treatment on the part of the people of Stafford, for he was received by them with open arms, and the most promising assurances of success. But the usage of elections has long made a certain degree of expence necessary to the success of a candidate for any county or town of consequence. And this was the only requisite in which Mr. Sheridan was deficient. The sanguine expectations, however, and ardent liberality of his friends, permitted not this to remain a fatal obstacle in his way, and our great orator commenced his Parliamentary career as Member for the Town of Stafford. He began, as he afterwards continued, through a long and consistent political life, by supporting the views

and arguments of opposition ; and though his eloquence did not immediately burst forth, but rather reserved itself for the present, to shine with more conspicuous lustre hereafter, he was by no means an idle, or ineffective assistant of his party. He might have been heard at that time as a declaimer in popular societies, and his pen was certainly employed in several publications of the day.* When, upon the Rockingham party coming into power, Mr. Fox was Secretary of State for the Foreign Department, Mr. Sheridan received his first political appointment, as Under Secretary to that gentleman. The Marquis of Rockingham's death, and the appointment of Lord Shelburne to be First Lord of the Treasury, threw out Mr. Sheridan's party, and with them his talents, the most formidable enemies of Ministers, into the scale of opposition.

* He took considerable part in " The Englishman " A paper conducted with great violence against Lord North and his party.

In 1783, his party coming again into power, Mr. Sheridan was appointed Secretary to the Treasury. It is a very common and a very true remark, that nothing so thoroughly sifts the character of any man, as the possession of power and authority ; for they awaken every passion, discover every propensity, and sometimes lead the way to desires and inclinations never before experienced. This is particularly the case in places abounding with patronage and emolument. Mr. Sheridan had very little opportunity for any trials of this kind. He had little power and no patronage, and he continued in office for a very short time. It must be observed, however, that, while in place, he conducted himself, if not with the accuracy and close attention of a man trained to habits of business, at least with integrity and honour. The Duke of Portland being afterwards succeeded as First Lord of the Treasury by Mr. Pitt, and Mr. Sheridan's party seldom in power, it has been

his lot almost uniformly to be the defender of unsuccessful men and measures, and in later times it is well known, that he has ever continued attached to the same party, and which has never been in power except for the short space of one year, when Mr. Sheridan was again appointed Secretary to the Treasury. Mr. Sheridan took little part in the memorable disputes concerning America. The principal efforts of his parliamentary oratory were displayed upon the following occasions:—

His defence of Mr. Fox's East India Bill—
His observations on Mr. Pitt's. Perfumery Bill, in the year 1785—His Speech on the Irish Propositions in the same year---The part which he took in the question of the proper mode of appointing a regency on the first appearance of His Majesty's lamented illness, and his noble conduct during the Naval Mutiny ;---omitting all mention of the wonderful display of eloquence that was exhi-

bited to the world in his speeches, on the impeachment of Warren Hastings, Esq. He has been the constant advocate of Parliamentary Reform, though without the dangerous temerity and impetuous violence of Reformers in general. . He has been a friend to the Liberty of the Press, and an asserter of religious toleration. Such is a short sketch of Mr. Sheridan's parliamentary career, a career consistent, spirited, and honourable, but upon which it would be superfluous here to dilate. The facts are so well known that it would be unnecessary---and they are so involved in the various opinions and prejudices attendant upon the great party questions in which he was engaged, that to express any decided approbation, or censure of the motives of himself and his party, would only be to revive animosities and to awaken unpleasant feelings that cannot be too soon forgotten.

It will be for the future historian, when the fermentation of political hostility shall have subsided, and the desire of truth and information shall have sprung up in its stead ; to point out to those who are to succeed us, the plain and striking merits of our great men ; to weigh them in the sober scale of unbiassed justice, and to adjudge to each his due share of censure or commendation which the prejudice of the moment prevent us from clearly discerning. In the meantime we may proudly yet mournfully contemplate Mr. Sheridan as the last of a bright and radiant constellation of splendid genius, talent, and eloquence,* whose meridian beams shone full upon the last age, and whose dying rays shed a pure and permanent lustre upon the present. Yes, permanent---for though passed, they can never be forgotten ; though no longer seen, they will be felt, as long as British hearts shall be capable

* Burke, Pitt, Fox, and Wyndham.

of appreciating merit, or drawing wisdom from the fountains of their ancestors. May their spirits preside over our councils, and animate the hearts of our statesmen : united in death, as they were divided in life, for the good of their country, may they watch over the scene of their former exertions, preserve it from the aggressions of faction, from the disgrace and pollution of pretended patriots. This is a point of view in which the subject may be considered without any danger of awakening unpleasant feelings, or exciting animosities among us. If we compare these bright luminaries of our political hemisphere with each other, (and it is by a comparison with each other, alone, that they would not be degraded) we shall find the great man, whom we are now considering, will not be injured by so trying and arduous a test. He had not the collected dignity of Pitt, nor the ardent energies of Fox. But to compensate for these, he was master of a delightful raillery, an

aptness of reply, and a style of sarcasm resistless, yet inoffensive, to which they were both of them strangers. There never was a popular speaker who made himself so few enemies as Mr. Sheridan, whose reproofs gave so little offence, and yet produced so great an effect.

His speeches,* if not so highly finished, and so well calculated for perusal, as those of Mr. Burke, produced beyond all question a much greater impression at the time, and remain unexcelled, if not unequalled, for strength of argument, and boldness of imagery. To those whose memories yet glow with the impression of his wonderful and well-sustained harangue upon the occasion of Mr. Hastings's trial, no words can heighten the effect, or improve

* That there should have been a degree of epigrammatic point in his harangues, sometimes inconsistent with the gravity of parliamentary discussion, is not so much to be wondered at, from the circumstance of his having so successfully turned his mind to witty dialogues and humorous allusions in his dramatic writings.

the recollection, and to those who heard it not, no words can convey an adequate idea of the impression produced; the unwearied attention which followed him through a speech of four hours duration,* though, perhaps, the feelings of the audience were pre-engaged against the orator, the breathless admiration that marked its conclusion, the glow of delight, visible in every countenance, declare the powers of his oratory to the present age. If those are to be believed who heard this oration, every faculty of the hearer was roused, and every desire amply gratified. Nothing was left unfinished, nothing imperfectly touched---The mind had nothing to wish for---Cicero, could he have heard it, might have revoked his doubts of the power of human oratory. Before we dismiss the comparison of Sheridan with his

* I allude to the 2d of the four days, through which this harrangue lasted, of which, see the encomiums by Mr. Burke in the House of Commons on the close of the day at Westminster Hall.

illustrious contemporaries, it is but justice to observe, that with the exception of Mr. Burke, he is the only one who has transmitted to posterity, any permanent written memorial of his talents ;* and that while we are indebted to the columns of a daily news-writer, or pamphleteer, for all that remains of Wyndham, Pitt, and Fox, Mr. Sheridan has enriched our language with some beautiful specimens of poetry, and the best comedies our country has produced.†

Knowing thus much of Mr. Sheridan, charmed, enlightened, fascinated, instructed as we have been by his literary productions,

* Such in discounting of illustrious men, has remarked particular eras in their lives, when owing to their superior genius or greatness, aided by a favourable combination of circumstances, they appeared to a striking advantage. How well might we add to these that glorious crisis in the life of our departed genius, when he was at the same moment delighting each of our Theatres, with the best plays in our language, and astonishing the House of Commons with one of the finest specimens of eloquence in that house.

† Unless you chuse to except Fox's *Life of James II.*

is it not a cruel, at least a misplaced compassion, to lament him as a lost son of genius, and to hear persons exclaiming, as is not very uncommon, "that such talents should have been thrown away---that he should have so neglected his powers of mind!" In the name of Heaven what is it these persons would regret?---What is it they would wish? If he has been untrue to his own abilities, in truth it is a valuable perversion, a glorious dereliction, that has purchased for us the noblest efforts of genius, and more than the most successful fruits of application:---In what department of literature, in what walk of genius will you search and not find the trophies of his excellence? It seems to have been the singular and enviable property of Mr. Sheridan, to unite in himself a number of talents, any of which would characterize the possessor as a man of taste, and some of which would singly serve to immortalize his name. A poet, an orator, a dramatist, a writer, lastly, a most

delightful companion. Turn over the pages of English poetry, and if his superior claims in the senate and the drama did not rivet your attention to another quarter, you will find him not unequal to himself in the character of a poet.* He is always pleasing, and his poetry flows in so sweet and harmonious a channel, that we cannot withhold our admiration from the writer, or our affection from the man. It bears with it the stamp of genius, the evidence of knowledge, and the charm of taste. Consult the Journals of Parliament, and you will find him improving, illustrating, convincing, gaining triumph for a good cause, and giving energy to a weak one; nay, surpassing the very models which had furnished his own standard of excellence; the stay of his own party, and the terror of his antagonists; other speakers might engage

* His poetical works, besides his *Monody to the Memory of Garrison*, consist in general of some beautiful epilogues, and some smaller pieces, which are about to be collected for the public.

the House, when the debate was young, and their attention fresh ; it was for him alone to chain down their drooping attention to the very subject which had fatigued and exhausted them, by the peculiar and finishing strokes of his oratory. View him again before the great tribunal of the nation, astonishing and delighting a multitude of various opinions and characters, working miracles in a bad cause,* and persevering for hours and days in a continued strain of unparalleled eloquence, any part of which might well pass for the highly worked-up and finished excellence of an orator. Behold him again triumphant in the Theatre---listen to the noisy acclamations of the many, and the gentler, but more flattering testimony to his merit, in the sober approbation of the few ; or observe him in the humbler situation of a party-writer, seconding with his pen the powerful impression of his tongue, abounding with arguments that convince, and images that illustrate !

* It is not hinted that Mr. Sheridan himself thought it a bad cause.

When Mr. Sheridan was in company, so delightful was his conversation, it seemed as if no one else ought to speak; and yet was there no man whose presence inspired such general ease and satisfaction. In his society every one was pleased with himself, and therefore in the best possible humour to be pleased with him :---his wit and humour were so fascinating, the beautiful result of mingled memory, quickness, and taste, that no one could resist them :---what is more to his honour, no one ever wished to resist them. Wit has too often the sting without the point. Mr. Sheridan's was exactly the reverse; the strokes of his wit were like the flashes of summer lightning, bright and playful, but innocent.

Possessed of all these charming qualities, and qualities they are, such as the world never before saw united in one man, and such as, without judging too severely of posterity, we may venture to predict they are not again likely to behold; shall we check the transport of our hearts, and coldly suggest that morality

might have expected more from genius than in this instance received? No ; be it remembered, that Sheridan, if he was not the active advocate, was never the insidious enemy of morality ; that he never employed his pen to detract from the loveliness of virtue, or to give an interest to the gloomy portrait of triumphant vice ; that he never studiously adorned the path of immorality with scenes and circumstances of passion, creating a dangerous sympathy, but feebly exhibiting their pernicious effects ; that he never stripped vice of her hideousness, to clothe her in the dignity of despair : be it remembered, that if he was a stranger to the necessary economy of private life, which is the only fault that can ever be attributed to him ; it arose from the fortuitous circumstance of his not being in his early days blessed with a competency ; that poverty, which has been known to blast the powers of genius, or hurry her productions into the world in a state of immaturity, may in him have had the effect of producing

habits of imprudence and neglect, the too frequent failing of men of talent; that if these may have led him into situations he might afterwards regret, they were amply atoned by such sorrows as genius must ever feel in the painful consciousness of having acted unworthily.

“ *Magnum virum facile crederes—bonum libenter.*”^{*}

As often as great public occasions called forth the graver energies of his character into action, he was at his post; the enemies of his country found him there and retired.

The statesman who had been always averse and opposed to him, stood forward, and gave amidst friends and foes, the noblest testimony to the merits of this great man.[†]

Upon the whole, if we wish to contemplate Mr. Sheridan with that favourable regard and

^{*} *Bonum virum facile crederes—magnum libenter.* Tacit. Agric. Vit. •

[†] Mr Pitt, upon occasion of the naval mutiny, which was one of Mr. Sheridan's noblest, and certainly his most useful exertion in the public service.

veneration, which should ever be the portion of departed genius, (and that we should so contemplate him is surely desirable,) let us look to the merits of his political life---to the consistency, firmness, and integrity of his public character---to his gallantry, his spirit---his generosity---his good-nature---and more than all to the splendid concentration of talents that adorned his mind;---let us reflect that his levities, such as they were, involve no crime, entail no disgrace upon his character---that they were the follies of a day, and as such will pass away, while the effects of his genius will endure for ever: that while the number of those who may have been partially injured by the former, is small and trifling, those who will be delighted and improved by the latter, are no less than ourselves and our children, while the nation shall endure;---and being sensible of this, let us not be outdone by posterity in giving an unqualified applause and veneration to his memory.

Mr. Sheridan, after a languishing illness, which he bore with great fortitude, died at twelve o'clock in the day, on Sunday the 7th of July, 1816, and was interred on the Saturday following, in Poet's Corner, Westminster Abbey, in a grave near those of Addison, Garrick and Cumberland. It was determined, as a means of showing the most respect, and giving it the highest degree of interest, that could be given to this solemn ceremony, that his relations and friends should follow him to the grave on foot; and in order to render this the more practicable, his body was removed to the house of his warm and constant friend, Peter Moore, Esq. At one o'clock, the procession moved from Great George Street.

The Pall-bearers were

| | |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| The Duke of Bedford | The Earl of Lauderdale |
| Earl Mulgrave | Bishop of London |
| Lord Holland | Lord Robert Spencer |

Chief Mourner—

Charles B. Sheridan, Esq.

| | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Henry Ogle, Esq. | Henry Streatfield, Esq. |
| Hon. E. Bouverie | Sir Charles Asgill |
| William Linley, Esq. | C. W. Ward, Esq. |

Followed by

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| H. R. H. Duke of York | H. R. H. Duke of Sussex |
| Duke of Argyll | Marquess of Anglesey |
| Earl Thanet | Earl Clare |
| — Harrington | — Essexborough |
| — Mexborough | — Rosslyn |
| — Yarmouth | Lord George H. Cavendish |
| Viscount Sidmouth | Viscount Granville |
| Lord Rivers | Lord Eglinton |
| — Lyndoch | Rt. Hon. George Canning |
| Rt. Hon. W. Wellesley Pole | Hon. L. Stanhope |
| Hon. W. Lamb | — T. Brande |
| — Ponsonby | — D. Kinnard |
| — Lieut.-Gen. Phipps | The Lord Mayor |
| Sir Thomas Mostyn | Sir Ronald Ferguson |
| — E. Home | — A. Pigott |
| — Samuel Romilly | — B. Bloomfield |
| Colonel Hughes | Owen Williams, Esq. |
| M. A. Taylor, Esq. | Peter Moore, Esq. |
| Captain Bennet | Dr. Bane |
| Robert Adair, Esq. | Samuel Rogers, Esq. |
| John Taylor Vaughan, Esq. | — Smith Esq. |
| W. J. Denison, Esq. | — Talbot, Esq. |

&c. &c. &c.

MR. SHERIDAN'S SPEECH,
*On the Summing up the Evidence on the Begum
Charge, delivered in Westminster Hall.*

Mr. Burke's Testimony to the Splendour of Mr. Sheridan's Talents, on his Summing up the Evidence on the Begum Charge.

MR. BURKE.—“ He has this day surprised the thousands who hung with rapture on his accents, by such an array of talents, such an exhibition of capacity, such a display of powers, as are unparalleled in the annals of oratory ; a display that reflected the highest honour upon himself, lustre upon letters, renown upon Parliament, glory upon the country. Of all species of rhetoric, of every kind of eloquence that has been witnessed or recorded, either in ancient or modern times ; whatever the acuteness of the bar, the dignity of the Senate, the solidity of the Judgment-seat, and the sacred morality of the pulpit, have hitherto furnished, nothing has surpassed, nothing has equalled what we have heard this day in Westminster Hall. No holy seer of religion—no sage—no statesman—no orator—no man of any description whatever has come up, in any one instance, to the pure sentiments of morality ; or, in the other, to that variety of knowledge, force of imagination, propriety and vivacity of allusion, beauty and elegance of diction, strength and copiousness of style, pathos and sublimity of conception, to which we have this day listened with ardour and admiration. From poetry up to eloquence, there is not a species of composition of which a complete and perfect specimen might not from that single speech be culled and selected.” (*Vide Parliamentary History and Debates, June 6, 1788, published by Hansard, &c.*)

SPEECH

DELIVERED IN WESTMINSTER HALL

BY THE LATE

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN, Esq.

ON THE

*Summoning up of the Evidence of the Begum Charge
Against Warren Hastings, Esq.*

Tuesday, June 3d, 1788.

THE Court being seated, precisely at twelve o'clock, MR. SHERIDAN rose.—It would be superfluous (he observed) for him to call the attention of their Lordships to the magnitude and importance of the subject before them ; to advert to the parties who were engaged in the business ; or to depict the situation of those multitudes who were ultimately to be affected. All this had already been done by the Hon. Gentleman (Mr. Burke) who opened the prosecution :—A man, whose genius exceeded every thing but his disposition—who understood and felt for all—who alone against man's oppression was able to assert the Rights of Man, and defend the general rights of humanity. Neither was it his intention

to enter into any detail which might be deemed foreign to the question immediately before the Court:—he would only indulge himself in a few words respecting some insinuations which had been thrown out against the persons concerned in this prosecution. It had been whispered, by whom he could not say, that there was something malicious, and something, perhaps, too violent in the manner in which it had been conducted. Speaking for himself, and as far as the heart of man could be known, for the other managers appointed by the Commons, he would boldly assert, that they had acted solely from conviction; not a conviction born in error, and nursed by prejudice; but a conviction founded on deliberate and well-grounded enquiry;—that they had proceeded, not as rejoicing in punishment, but impelled by a sanguine hope of remedy.—Personal malice! God forbid that they should indulge such a sensation against the unfortunate gentleman at the bar; but how, when they were to speak of Rapine, of Cruelty, and of Extortion, could such ideas be conveyed but in consonant language? There was undoubtedly a difference between Impeachment for capital Crimes, and those for Misdemeanours only. In proceedings on the former, every latitude had been indulged by usage, every aggravation was employed, and every act of the Prisoner tortured

into Criminality. No such privilege was claimed by the managers on the present occasion; but yet it should be considered by those, whose pity seemed to rise in proportion with the guilt of its object;—that if such a mode of proceeding was admissible in the former Case, where the life of the Prisoner was affected, it was still more justifiable on an Impeachment like the present; where the utmost consequences of guilt, when proved, would be but a *splendid exclusion* of the Criminal from that Society which he had injured, or a *trifling deduction* from the spoils of a long continued Extortion.

It had been observed, what was undoubtedly true, that no complaint from the natives of India had been presented in the course of these proceedings. Those, however, who were first to make this observation, were fully convinced that meekness in suffering was there a part of the national character, and that their terrors had been too deeply impressed, not to be long remembered. But though a despair of British Justice had prevailed through that Peninsula; though their subdued hearts could not even hope for relief;—yet their claims on the Justice and Humanity of their Lordships were not thereby diminished, but recommended. He would not mention this Despair, without accompanying the observation by proof; he therefore read Extracts from two

Letters, the first, lately received from Lord *Cornwallis*; the second, enclosed from Captain *Kirkpatrick* to his Lordship: from both which it appeared, that such was the prevailing sense through India, of the injuries inflicted by the English, and of their repeated violations of every compact, that it would be long indeed before their confidence in English faith, or their reliance on English justice, could again be restored.

To these complaints their Lordships were now to answer, not by professions, but by facts:—not by remedial acts directed to the future, but by an exemplary punishment inflicted on past delinquency: It was incumbent on them to shew to the oppressed natives of India, and to future Governors and Judges, that there could be no authority so high, no office so sacred, as not to be subject to the paramount power of British Justice.—“ It is not the peering suspicion of apprehended guilt; it is not any popular abhorrence of its wide-spreading consequences; it is not the secret consciousness in the bosom of the Judge, which can excite the vengeance of the law; and authorize its infliction! No; in this good land, as high as it is happy, because as just as it is free, all is definite, equitable, and exact—the laws must be satisfied before they are incurred; and ere a hair of the head can be plucked to the ground, legal guilt must be established by legal proof!”

Though the greater part of the Evidence on this occasion had been, with a few exception, wrung from the unrelenting accomplices of the prisoner—from men who had partook of the spoils, and were involved in the guilt; yet had he therefore no indulgence to demand, nor had he no request that the Court should take that as evidence on this occasion, which on any other they might deem themselves bound to refuse. He, on the contrary, was now to bring forward to their Lordships a Mass of Evidence;—Weak no doubt, in some parts, and incompetent—and yet more deplorable, as undistinguished by any compunctious visitings of repenting accomplices; but yet, enough, and enough in sure validity, to abash the front of guilt no longer hid, and flash conviction on conscientious judges. In the performance of this task, he observed, he should have the less difficulty, as their Lordships had attended to the whole, voluminous and complicated as it appeared, with a diligence which did honour to their feelings, and shewed their individual sense of the dignity of that high Tribunal, which they collectively formed.

The first part of this Evidence, to which he should call the attention of the Court, was the Defences delivered in by Mr. Hastings to the House of Commons, and to their Lordships. On these, as being the voluntary admissions of

the Prisoner, unextorted by any threat, and unbiassed by any persuasion, much stress had undoubtedly been laid. To a part of these, however, an objection had been made, the most extraordinary, perhaps, that had ever been advanced in a Court of Criminal Justice:—an objection which, when Mr. Hastings was well advised, as he undoubtedly was—when he was saved from his own *rash Guidance*, the Managers could scarcely have expected. This objection was, that a Part of the *first Defence* in particular, not having been written by Mr. Hastings, but by some of his friends, that Gentleman was not bound by any admissions therein contained. Mr. Hastings, on appearing at the Bar of the House of Commons, had pleaded the haste in which he had written, in palliation of his inaccuracies: he had even made a merit of doing that himself, which would be less dangerous if he had committed it to another!—But now, said Mr. Sheridan, that he finds that there is something more than inaccuracy—something fraught with that actual danger which he had not apprehended—he reverts to that plea which he had abandoned, and declares that he had committed the trust to others!—He disclaims all his former merits, and avers that, in making up his tale, he had not trusted solely to his own powers,—that he had put his *Memory* into *Commission*, and *parcelled out*

his *Conscience* into different departments. The structure, it appeared, went on, whilst Mr. Hastings was content with overseeing and cheering his Labourers.—“ These like raw materials, the master workman distributes about him to all hands awaiting : his words are to be strung—arguments spun—passages are to be woven : he puts his conscience into departments—Major Scott,” says he, “ take care of my consistency—Mr. Middleton, you have my *memory* in commission!—Prove me a financier, Mr. Shore.—Answer for me, Mr. Holt: (all Journeymen, good enough for the House of Commons, though not for your Lordships).”—The work being thus done, Mr. Hastings surveyed it with a careless glance, and adopted it as his own. But now that its defects appear, the Child of his Adoption becomes the object of his aversion, his approbation ceases, and his language is totally changed.—The Defence is, in general, made up of general denials of the Charges, intermixed with encomiums on his own conduct ; yet Mr. Hastings exclaims, “ Subject me to all the other evidence against me :—I know I can trust to their want of Recollection, and their force of Attachment.—Help, one and all, to bear me up under the bare pressure of my laurels, the burthen of my glory ! Refresh, and save me, from the calamities of my state, from the peril of my own

panegyric." The haste in which these productions were written, was also alleged by Mr. Hastings as an apology for every error; but did it follow, that, because a man wrote rapidly, he should also write falsely? or was it, that the truth and candour of Mr. Hastings were so deeply buried in his bosom, that long study alone could bring them upwards, whilst the natural falsehood, floating on the surface, could be transferred with extemporaneous readiness to every topic, whether to be written, or to be uttered? These were the apologies offered for the variations, the admissions, and the inconsistency, of Mr. Hastings's Defences: but these, it was to be hoped, for the sake of propriety and good sense, would never again be repeated.

Mr. Sheridan, on quitting this subject, entered into a very full and happy delineation of the situation of the Princesses of *Oude*. No perusal of the Turkish History, he observed, nor attention to the precepts of the Mahometan religion, could give their Lordships any idea of the manners of the women of high *cast* in Hindostan. Educated in a profound respect to the customs of their Persian ancestors, they maintain a purer style of Prejudice, and a loftier degree of Superstition; dwelling perpetually within the precincts of their Zenanas, the Simplicity of their sentiments was equalled only by the Purity of their conduct. In

those innocent retreats, These women derive from their ancestor, a character distinct and sacred. *Enshrined*, not *immured*; confined, not by the jealousy of others, coarse and brutal—but by a jealousy of their own: a nice anxiety for their honour, which taught them to consider as inexpressible prophanation, the admiring eye; and to hold the public gaze as respect degraded. However mistaken their ideas, they were placed there by the hand of Piety, and could not be disturbed but by a sacrilege. They were as Relics on an altar, which, though deposited by Superstition, none but the impious would disturb.

(Sir Elijah Impey had confirmed this character; had brought instances of it, and established the testimony.)

In addition to those claims, Mr. Hastings himself had borne testimony to the Duty which Children owed to Parents in Hindostan: yet the Bhow Begum, or mother of the reigning Nabob, had still stronger demands on the affection of her son.—In the year 1764, when *Sujah Dowlah*, after the battle of Buxar, was driven from that territory by the English—which their politic Generosity afterwards restored—she bore her private treasures to his assistance, and was rewarded by the respectful attachment of his future life, with the devise of all his territories to her son.

She had also interfered in a quarrel between her son and her husband, and, when the savage father was about to strike down his son with a sabre, at the expense of her blood, preserved that life which she gave.—These were pleas in her favour, which would have exacted the reverence of any man—but *one!* — And what ties could, or should, have more force? She had given him birth; she had presented to him a crown; she had enriched his throne; and she had *preserved* the life she had *given*. Yet had *policy* found it necessary to set aside these sacred obligations, and turn the son against the mother! the parent against the child! — And what was yet more, the death-bed recommendations of Sujah Dowlah, were all of no weight with Mr. Hastings. This was therefore the object of the present charge;—that where he owed protection, he had been the severest oppressor; that the weakness which should have claimed his aid, but excited his violence; that he had subjected the son thus, to make him the ungracious instrument of his tyranny over the parent, and had first made him a *slave*, in order that he might become— a *monster!*

The interference of Mr. *Bristow* in 1775, in the differences between the Begums and the Nabob, in consequence of the claims of the latter, was the next ground of Mr. SHERIDAN'S obser-

ventions.—Mr. Bristow had then, in a conversation with the superior or elder Begum, thrown out an insinuation, that the treasures which she possessed were the treasures of the State,—and on this insinuation, so termed by Mr. Bristow himself, had Mr. Hastings founded all his arguments on that head, and on which he lately appeared to place so much reliance.—The Begums at that time gave up to the *Asoph ul Dowlah* sums amounting to five hundred and fifty thousand pounds.—Of this a part was to be paid in goods, which as they consisted of arms, elephants, &c. the Nabob alleged to be his property, and refused to accept as payment. This occasioned a dispute which was referred to the Board of *Calcutta*. Mr. Hastings then vindicated the right of the Begums to all the goods in the Zenana, and brought over the majority of the Council to his opinion. The ideas then placed on record, he had since found it convenient to disown, as belonging not to him, but to the majority of the Council!—There are in this assemblage those who are perfect in their ideas of law and justice, and who understand tolerably well, majorities and minorities; but how shall I instance this new doctrine of Mr. Hastings? It is as if Mr. Burke, the *great leader of the cause*, should, some ten years hence, revile the *Managers* and commend Mr. Hastings! Good

God! might say one of those gentlemen, it was *you* who instigated the inquiry: it was *you* who made me think as I did! Aye; very true, might Mr. Burke reply, but I was then in a *minority*: I am now in a *majority*; I have now left my opinions behind me; and I am no longer responsible."

The claims, however, it was observable, of the Nabob, as to the treasure of the Begums, were at this time the only plea alleged for the seizure. These were always founded on a passage of that *Koran* which was perpetually quoted, but never proved.—Not a word was then mentioned of the strange rebellion which was afterwards conjured up, and of which the *existence* and the *notoriety* were equally a secret.—A disaffection which was at its height, at the very time when the Begums were dispensing their liberality to the Nabob, and exercising the greatest generosity to the English Officers in distress!—a disturbance, in short, without its parallel in history, which was raised by two *Women*,—carried on by two *Eunuchs*,—and finally suppressed by an *Affidavit*!

Mr. Sheridan then adverted to the negotiations of Mr. Middleton with the Begums in 1778, when the discontents of the superior Begum would have induced her to leave the country, unless her authority was sanctioned, and her property se-

cured by the Guarantee of the Company.—This Guarantee, the Council, or Mr. Hastings, had thought it necessary to deny, as knowing that if the agreements with the Elder Begum were proved, it would affix to Mr. Hastings the guilt of all the sufferings of the Women of the Khrod Mahal, the revenues for whose support were secured by the same engagement. In treating this part of the subject, the principal difficulty arose from the *uncertain* evidence of Mr. Middleton, who, though concerned in the negotiation of *four* treaties, could not recollect affixing his signature to *three* out of that number. Mr. Sheridan proved, however, from the evidence even of Mr. Middleton, that a Treaty had been signed in October, 1778, wherein the rights of the Elder Begum were fully recognized; a provision secured for the Women and Children of the late Vizier in the Khord Mahal; and that those engagements had received the fullest sanction of Mr. Hastings. These facts were confirmed by the evidence of Mr. Purling, a gentleman, who, Mr. Sheridan said, had delivered himself fairly, and as having no *foul secrets* to conceal. He had transmitted copies of these engagements in 1780 to Mr. Hastings at Calcutta; the answer returned was, that in arranging the taxes on the other districts, he should pass over the Jaghires of the Begums. No notice was then taken of any impropriety in

the transactions in 1778, nor any notice given of an intended revocation of those engagements.

But in June, 1781, when General Clavering, and Colonel Monson, being no more, and Mr. Francis having returned to Europe, all the *hoard* and *arrear* of collected evil burst forth without restraint, and Mr. Hastings determined on his Journey to the Upper Provinces;—it was then that, without adverting to intermediate transactions, he met with the Nabob Asoph ul Dowlah, at Chunar, and received from him the mysterious present of 100,000*l.*—To form a proper idea of this transaction, it was only necessary to consider the respective situation of him who gave, and him who received, this present. It was not given by the Nabob from the superflux of his wealth, nor in the abundance of his esteem for the man to whom it was given: it was, on the contrary, a prodigal bounty, drawn from a country depopulated,—no matter whether by natural causes, or by the grinding of Oppression. It was raised by an exaction, which took what Calamity had spared, and Rapine overlooked;—and pursued those angry dispensations of Providence, when a *prophetic* chastisement had been inflicted on a *fated* realm. The secrecy which had marked this transaction, was not the smallest proof of its criminality. When *Benaram Pundit* had, a short time before, made a present to the Company of a

lack of rupees, Mr. Hastings, in his own language, deemed it “worthy the praise of being recorded.” But in this instance, when ten times that sum was given, neither Mr. Middleton nor the Council were acquainted with the transaction, until Mr. Hastings, four months after, felt himself compelled to write an account to England, and the intelligence returned thus circuitously to his friends in India !—It was peculiarly observable in this transaction, how much the *Distresses* of the different parties were at variance. Mr. Hastings travels to the Nabob, to see, no doubt, and inquire into his *Distresses*, but immediately takes from him 130,000*l.* to be applied to the necessities of the *distressed* East-India Company. But, on further deliberation, these considerations vanish : a *third* object arises, more worthy than either of the former, and the money is taken from the one, and demanded from the other, to be applied to the use of—the *distressed* Mr. Hastings.

The money, it was alleged by Mr. Hastings, had been originally taken to discharge the Arrear of the Army. It had not been applied to that use, because it was received in bills on Gopal Dos, a rich Banker, of Benares, who was then kept a prisoner by Cheit Sing.—Major Scott being questioned on the subject, declared, that bills on Gopal Dos were as good as cash ; for that, though the principal of the house was a prisoner,

that circumstance made no difference whatsoever with the other partners. Thus Mr. Hastings was inconsistent with himself, by alleging an objection which should have prevented his taking the money, in the first instance, for the purpose he had stated; and Major Scott contradicting Mr. Hastings, removed the objection, and restored the business to its original footing. But, through all those windings of mysterious Hypocrisy, and of artificial Concealment, it was easy to mark the sense of hidden guilt. Mr. Hastings himself, being driven from every other hold, advanced the stale plea of *State Necessity*: but of this necessity he had brought no proof; it was a necessity which listens to whispers, for the purpose of crimination, and dealt in rumour to prove its own existence. To a General leading the armies of Britain; to an Admiral bearing her thunders over the seas,—the plea of Necessity might be indulged, if the wants of those were to be supplied whose blood had been spilt in the service of their country; but then, like the imperial eagle descending from its nest, though it desolated the skirts of the rock, the Motive and the Conduct would be equally conspicuous. No concealment would then be necessary, and they would disdain the veil which covered the dark mean arts of busy Peculation.

On the business of the Treaty of Chunar,

which succeeded the acceptance of this bribe, Mr. Sheridan was equally perspicuous and equally severe. It was a proceeding, he observed, which, as it had its beginning in Corruption, had its continuance in Fraud, and its end in Violence. The first proposition of the Nabob after his recent liberality, was, that the army should be removed, and all the English recalled from his dominions. The Bribe which he had given was the obvious price of their removal. He felt the weight of their oppression—he knew, to speak his own language, “that, when the English staid, they staid to ask for something.” Though their predecessors had exhausted the revenue—though they had shaken the tree until nothing remained upon its *leafless* branches, yet a new flight was on the wing to watch the first *buddings* of its prosperity, and to nip every promise of future luxuriance.

To this demand Mr. Hastings had promised to accede, and to recall every Englishman from the province; but by an evasion, which Mr. Middleton disclosed with so much difficulty to their Lordships, on the last day of his appearance, the promise was virtually recalled. No *orders* were afterwards given for the establishment of Englishmen in the province, but *recommendations* of the same effect, with Mr. Middleton and the

Vizier, were sent, and the practice continued.—In the agreement respecting the Resumption of the Jaghires, the Nabob had been duped by a similar deception. He had demanded and obtained leave to resume those of certain individuals: Mr. Hastings, however, defeated the permission, by making the order general; knowing that there were some favourites of the Nabob whom he could be by no means brought to dispossess.—Such was the conduct of Mr. Hastings, not in the moment of cold or crafty policy, but in the hour of confidence, and the effervescence of his gratitude for the favour he had just received. Soaring above every common feeling, he could deceive the man to whose liberality he stood indebted—even his *Gratitude* was *perilous*—and a *danger* actually awaited on the return which he was to make to an effusion of generosity!

The transactions in which Sir *Elijah Impey* bore a share, and the tenour of his evidence, were the next objects of (Mr. Sheridan's) animadversion.—The late Chief Justice of Bengal, he remarked, had repeatedly stated, that Mr. Hastings left Calcutta with *two* Resources in his view,—those of *Benares* and of *Ouâre*. It appeared, however, from every circumstance, that the latter resource was never in his contemplation, until the insurrections in Benares, terminating in the cap-

ture of Bedjeygur, had destroyed all his hopes in that province. At that instant the mind of Mr. Hastings, fertile in resources, fixed itself on the Treasures of the Begums, and Sir Elijah Impey was dispatched to collect materials for their crimination. But I have ever thought, (said Mr. Sheridan,) the selection of such a personage, for such a purpose, one of the greatest aggravations of the guilt of Mr. Hastings.—That he, the purity of whose character should have influenced his conduct, even in his most domestic retirements; that he, who, if consulting the dignity of British Justice, should have remained as stationary as his Court in Calcutta;—that such a man should be called to travel *Five Hundred* miles, for the transaction of such a business, was a deviation without a plea, and a degradation without example.—This, however, was in some degree a question to be abstracted for the consideration of those who adorned and illumined the seats of Justice in Britain, and the purity of whose character precluded the necessity of any further observations on so different a conduct.

With respect to the manner in which Sir Elijah Impey had delivered his evidence, it required some observation, though made without imputing to that gentleman the smallest culpability. Sir Elijah had admitted, that in giving his evidence

he had never answered without looking equally to the probability, and the consequences of the fact in question. Sometimes he had even admitted circumstances of which he had no recollection beyond the mere probability that they had taken place. By consulting in this manner what was *probable*, and the contrary, he might certainly have corrected his memory at times, and Mr. Sheridan said he would accept that mode of giving his testimony, provided that the inverse of the proposition might also have place, and that where a circumstance was *improbable*, a similar degree of credit might be subtracted from the testimony of the witness. *Five* times in the House of Commons, and *twice* in that Court, for instance, had Sir Elijah Impey borne testimony, that a rebellion was raging at Fyzabad, at the time of his journey to Lucknow. Yet on the *eighth* examination, he had contradicted all the former, and declared, that what he meant was that the rebellion *had* been raging, and the country was then in some degree restored to quiet.—The reasons assigned for the former errors, were, that he had forgotten a letter received from Mr. Hastings, informing him that the rebellion was quelled, and that he had also forgotten his own proposition of travelling through Fyzabad to Lucknow. With respect to the letter, nothing could be said, as it was not in evidence; but the other observation

would scarcely be admitted, when it was recollected that in the House of Commons, Sir Elijah Impey had declared that it was his proposal to travel through Fyzabad, which had originally brought forth the information that the way was obstructed by the rebellion!—From this information Sir Elijah Impey had gone by the way of Illyabad,—but what was yet more singular, was, that on his return he would again have returned by the way of Fyzabad, if he had not been again informed of the danger;—so that had it not been for these friendly informations, the Chief Justice would have run plump into the very *focus* of the rebellion!—There were two circumstances, however, worthy of remark;—the *first* was, that Sir *Elijah Impey* should, when charged with so dangerous a commission as that of procuring evidence, to prove that the *Begums* had meditated the expulsion of their son from the Throne, and of the English from Bengal, should twice intend to pass through the city of their residence; and that—This *gidây Chief Justice* disregards business; he wants to see the country; like some *innocent school boy*, he takes the primrose path, and amuses himself as he goes; he thinks not that his errand is on danger and death.—The second circumstance worthy of observation, was, that if a conclusion could be made from a cloud of circumstances, the inference on this occasion

would undoubtedly be, that Sir Elijah Impey was dissuaded by Mr. Hastings, and Mr. Middleton from passing by the way of Fyzabad, as well knowing, that if, as a friend to Mr. Hastings, he were to approach the Begums, he would be convinced by his reception, that nothing could be more foreign from the truth than the idea of their supposed disaffection.—It was also observable, that Sir Elijah Impey, at Lucknow, taking evidence in the face of day in support of this charge of rebellion against the Begums, when conversing with the Nabob and his Minister, heard not a single word from either of a rebellion, by which it was proposed to dethrone the Nabob, and to change the Government of his dominions!—And equally unaccountable it appeared that Sir Elijah Impey, who had advised the taking of those affidavits for the safety of Mr. Hastings, had never read them at the time, for the purpose of seeing whether they were sufficient for the purpose, or the contrary!—After so long a reserve, however, and after declaring on oath that he thought it unnecessary, the next step taken by Sir Elijah Impey, was to read the affidavits, as, however late, they might contribute something to his information. He had been led to this study by his own allegation, from having been misled by Mr. SHERIDAN, one of the managers on the part of the Commons, who by looking at a book which

he held in his hand, had persuaded him to declare that a sworn interpreter was present on the receiving of those affidavits; that Major Davy was present for that purpose—and that whoever it was, he was perfectly satisfied with his conduct on the occasion; when it was actually in evidence that no interpreter whatsoever was present.—Now, said Mr. Sheridan, how I, by merely looking into a book, could *intimate* the presence of an interpreter, could *inculcate* the assistance of Major Davy, and could also *look* the satisfaction conceived by Sir Elijah Impey, are questions which I believe that Gentleman alone is able to determine!

He should admit, however, he said, that Sir Elijah Impey had not strictly attended to forms on the occasion of taking those affidavits; that he had merely directed the Bible to be given to the Whites, and the Koran to the Blacks, and had packed up in his wallet the returns of both without any further enquiry; or that he had glanced over them in India, having previously cut off all communication between his *eye* and his *mind*, so that no consciousness was transferred from the former to the latter; and that he had read them in England, if possible, with less information:—however strange these circumstances might be, he would admit them all:—he would

even admit, that the affidavits were legally and properly taken—and yet would prove that those affidavits were not sufficient to sustain any one point of criminality against those who were the subjects of the present Charge.

[Adjourned to Friday.]

FRIDAY, JUNE THE 6th.

MR. SHERIDAN resumed his speech, where he had left off on Tuesday last, with a short preface to the following effect :

In obedience to the commands of the Honourable Managers, he said, he rose to continue the observations which he had to make, in summing up the evidence on the second Charge against Warren Hastings, Esq.—In doing this, he trusted it would be believed that he had been, and would continue to be, most guarded in quoting the evidence on which he might have to animadvert, correctly and accurately, and that for this purpose he had left off where he did, a part of what he wished to observe on not being in the way.

He left off at the affidavits, and here it was that he meant to resume his speech: he considered their Lordships as in fact employed in trying the truth of the matter of those affidavits, and the allegations therein contained, upon which he would have no objection to rest the whole truth of the charge brought against the prisoner. It was in this view, and for this purpose, that he wished to take up some part of their Lordships time; but, before he entered into the discussion of the affidavits, there were two or three matters on which he was desirous of saying a few words. In the outset of this business, it had been held forth as an allegation on the part of the prisoner at the bar, and as an excuse of the atrocious proceeding against the Begums, that they had been guilty of various acts of hostility, as well as of a wish to dethrone the Nabob; and it was asserted that the affidavits taken at Lucknow all tended to prove these facts. Of the first of these two allegations, he challenged the Counsel for the prisoner to produce a single instance drawn from those affidavits. There was not a single instance,—nay, the allegation was even abandoned by themselves;—a pretty strong proof that it had been taken up lightly. When a charge consisted of two parts, and one of them was abandoned, it was very natural for a man to distrust the other. It certainly was not a proof that the other was

false also, nor did he mean to assume any such argument; he said only, that it would influence the mind so far as to make it curious and particular in the enquiry, and to make it at least distrust the truth of the other branch of the charge also. But their Lordships, in this particular case, would have additional reason for jealousy and distrust: they would recollect from whom these assertions and charges against the Begums came, and by whom they were made: they were made by Mr. Hastings, who went forth from Calcutta in the year 1781, for the avowed purpose of collecting a large sum of money, and who acknowledged that he had but two resources. Here then we had, in the same person, the accuser and the judge—nay more, we had a judge corruptly interested in the accusation he was to make, and who intended to draw a profit, and reap an advantage, from deciding on the accusation which he himself made. He would not take up their Lordships time, in saying a word on the gross turpitude of such a double character, nor on the frontless disregard of all the feelings which ought to actuate the human heart, in thus mixing characters that ought never to be joined. What did he desire from all this? Only that an accusation, made under such circumstances, should not meet with implicit belief, and that their Lordships, remembering that it was so made, would accompany

him through the discussion of the affidavits, free and uninfluenced by those prefatory and general assertions.

The next matter that he was anxious to press on their consideration, previous to his taking up the affidavits, was the infinite improbability of such an intention being true, from the utter impossibility of executing the design. Estimating the power of the Begums at the most sanguine standard, it could not evidently be in their reach to accomplish any overthrow, decisive or momentary, of the Nabob, much less of the English. He was not, however, so weak as to assert a doctrine, that because a thing was improbable, it was not therefore attempted; or that, because they had no interest in the accomplishment of the object, they therefore did not undertake it. He could not look to Mr. Hastings without knowing, and being forced to acknowledge, that there were people with such a perverse turn of mind as to prosecute mischief without interest; and that there were passions in the human soul, which lead to turpitude without a motive.

He now came to the consideration of the affidavits—that mass of legal evidence on which the prisoner meant to rest his defence, and which he considered of so much consequence to his acquittal on this charge. He had said, that when the Honourable Member of the House of Commons came

to this charge, he treated the affidavits in his peculiar manner, and loaded them with terms of opprobrious reproach. What the peculiar manner of his Honourable Friend was, as hinted in this manner, he could not tell; but he, for his own part, would say, that if they were treated otherways than with disdain, they had not their desert. It was asserted, that they were taken in the desire of procuring the best possible evidence of the state of the country, and of the circumstances of the insurrection. This was a direct falsehood; —they were taken for no other purpose but that of justifying Mr. Hastings in his plunder of the Begums; that no other intention was in the minds of any of the persons concerned, and that the design was not formed, until, by the failure of one of his resources, this only remained for the plunderer.

He left off with the crippled testimony of his friend Dewen Sing. Here then he began, and he entered into a minute discussion of all the affidavits, reading, comparing, and commenting on the passages. To enumerate all these would require much space: nor, unless the reader was well acquainted with all the facts, would it be possible for us to make him taste and feel the strength of Mr. Sheridan's reasoning, which was as close, connected, and convincing, as any speech we ever heard on any occasion. He par-

ticularly animadverted on the affidavits of Hyder Beg Cawn, who, though the Minister of the Nabob, and the man of all others the best acquainted with the transactions then passing in the country, did not say one syllable on the subject of the pretended rebellion, nor hint any thing of the kind; and this, though the affidavit was made in November, 1781, and the rebellion was pretended to have been at least previous to that time:—on that of Mr. Middleton, which also was taken on the 27th of November, and that after he knew the pleasure of Mr. Hastings as to the plunder of the Begums. The only passage which his affidavit contained respecting the insurrection, was, that he had heard from rumour that they had given much encouragement, and some aid, to the Jaghiredars, in resisting the resumption; and that he heard there had been a good disposition in them towards the Rajah Cheit Sing. The whole of his evidence went on mere hearsay and rumour, and it amounted to much encouragement and some aid—on which circumstance it was that he made up his conscience to the plunder, and probably to the destruction of the ladies. He knew nothing of it himself, though he was the Resident. He saw no insurrection; he met with no indispositions; he knew nothing of it himself, but he had heard that they had encouraged the Jaghiredars to resist, and on this,

and no more, was this conscientious servant of Mr. Hastings ready to execute any scheme of plunder that he should devise.—The Hon. Manager also particularly adverted to the affidavit of Major M'Donald, of Captain Gordon, and of a Frenchman, whose deposition was quite in the French style, magnificent and glittering: it talked of his having penetrated the desarts—of his having seen tygers—of his having kept the best company—and heard a vast number of important rumours, but not one word about the rebellion of the Begums.—He went through the affidavits of Colonel Esmé, and, among others, to that stating that three Zemindars, on the 31st of December, had said, that they were credibly informed that there was a design in the Begums against the Nabob. But these conscientious Serjeants would not suffer their names to be mentioned: all the reward that they expected was to be concealed—although they were thus rendering service to their Sovereign, and that that Sovereign was now in entire possession of power, and free from all possible effects of any meditated hostility from the quarter alleged to have designs.

Having stated the contents of the several affidavits, he said, he knew that in a Court of Law, if the trial were depending merely on the truth and validity of these affidavits, he should be stopt, if he attempted to begin any answer to,

and observation upon them. He should be told from the Bench—What do you mean to answer? There is nothing contained in these affidavits upon which we can suffer you to take up the time of the Court one minute. There is not, from the beginning to the end, one particle of legal, substantial, or even a defensible proof. Nothing but hearsay and rumour. Such he knew would be the admonition which he should receive in any Court of Law; but meaning and wishing to meet every thing at their Lordships' bar, on which the prisoner could build the smallest degree of dependance, it was his wish to examine separately the points which it was the aim of the prisoner to set up by these affidavits. They were three in number, and he should treat of each singly.

1. That the Begums gave assistance to the Rajah Cheyt Sing.

2. That they encouraged and assisted the Jaghiredars to resist the resumptions of the Jaghires.

- And, 3. That they were the principal movers of all the commotions in Oude.

These were the three allegations, which it was meant to insinuate these affidavits contained—and all these were accompanied with a general charge, that the Begums were in rebellion. He declared, that in regard to the last insinuation, the best

antiquarian in our society would be, after all, never the wiser!—Let him look where he would, where can he find any vestige of battle, or a single blow? In this rebellion, there is no soldier, neither horse nor foot: not a man is known fighting: no office-order survives, not an express is to be seen. This great rebellion, as notorious as our *forty-five*, passed away—unnatural, but not raging—*beginning* in *nothing*—and ending, no doubt, just as it began! If rebellion, my Lords, can thus form unseen, it is time for us to look about us. What hitherto has been *dramatic*, may become *historical*. If rebellions of such a kind could be, there was no saying where a rebellion might not exist. Perhaps, at the very moment that he was speaking, there might be a rebellion raging in the heart of London. Perhaps it might be at this moment lying *perdue* in some of the adjacent villages; or like the ostentatious encampment that had given celebrity to Brentford and Ealing, it might have taken up its head-quarters at Hammersmith, or Islington, ready to pour down its violence on the approach of night. He was very eager to ascertain the time of this horrid rebellion. There was nothing so clear and manifest as this fact—that there was none in the beginning of August 1781. On the 29th of that month there were confidential letters from Col. Morgan the commanding officer, and there

was not one syllable in these letters of any such thing. He afterwards detaches troops from Cawn Poore; and on the 27th of September he gives an account of some insurrection at Lucknow; but of none at Fyzabad, nor of any thing like it. There was a letter from Major Hannay, then at the Rajah's Court, dated the 10th of September, in which there is an account of the state of the Rajah's affairs; but not one syllable of any design of his being assisted by the Begums. There was after this a letter from the same Court, communicating the resources of the Rajah. In this letter he was advised to apply to the Nabob himself, from whom there was a probability of his receiving succour; but not to apply to Hyder Beg, who was stated to be in the interest of the English. During all this time, therefore, there was no rebellion. The Nabob went to see his mother, the very lady who was said to have risen in rebellion against him. But Mr. Middleton stated, that he was accompanied by 2000 horse, having no martial memory on common occasions. Mr. Middleton could exactly tell, that these troops kept pace with the Nabob, who travelled very fast, so much so that he could hardly keep up with him; but the Nabob having, at full gallop, according to Mr. Middleton, who stood by out of his wits, and with a gleam of martial

memory, stating he had taken 2000 horse, camels, elephants and all with him. While Sir Elijah, like a man going to learn fashions in France, or freedom in England, takes a sportive tour, as smooth and well-beaten as *Old Brentford*—And while the Nabob, seeing a rebellion without an army, shews a Prince without his guard—resolves not to be outdone—and goes incog. to be a match for the rebellion!

He observed the Counsel seized on the 2000 horse, and certainly meant to assert, that these 2000 horse were taken for no other purpose than to quell the insurrection; unfortunately, however, for the martial memory of Mr. Middleton, Captain Edwards, who was rather more of a military man, and whose duty it was to accompany the Nabob, stated that he had but five or six hundred horse, and those so miserably equipped, and so bad, that they were not able to keep up with him, and but a few indeed were near his person, or within the reach of any command, so as to be applied to any service; for of these few, the most were disaffected and mutinous from being ill paid; so that the horse that he had with him were rather disposed to assist than to quell any insurrections. Still more unfortunately, the memory of Mr. Middleton had unexpectedly cleared up, and informed the court that it was a constant thing for the

Princes of India to travel with a great equipage, and that it was considered as a disrespect to the person whom they visited, to come unattended. But the Counsel should have the whole of the horse, camels, elephants, and all, and they should all gallop as fast as they might please to wish.—What did they mean, or wish to establish from this fact? It never was their intention to insinuate that the Nabob went to pay his respects to his mother unattended by his retinue. He could not mean to go *incog.* unless he wished to keep pace with the rebellion.—That hearing of a rebellion of two old women without an army, he thought that it should be quelled by a Prince in disguise, without his guards. They did not mean to say, that the Indian Princes travelled like the Princes of Europe, who sometimes from one motive, and sometimes from another—at times from political views, and at times from curiosity—travelling some to France to learn manners, others to England to learn liberty—chose to be relieved from the pomps of state, and from the drudgery of equipage.—It was not so in India—where the manners required ostentation, and where it would be considered as an insult for one Prince to visit another without maintaining his state.

In the distress of the nation, which followed, Sadit Ally alone seems to escape; he says, he suffers nothing; because, though in Europe to

impoverish is not always to acquit, yet in India, *poverty* and *parity*, at least, insolvency and safety, are terms that are convertible; and where treasure is little, the treason can be nothing at all!

A small reverse this, of fact and history; but that is no matter!

Captain Gordon was not called, and, when he does appear, I hope it will be with contrite zeal and penitential eagerness; that he will freely dilate on the kind services done him by the Princesses of Oude; and, standing in the sight of God, who gave that breath they preserved, he will vindicate nature, and prove that gratitude should not be destruction.

He then, as he said, would put to the rout a thousand nudges, who were said to be dispatched by the Begums, for the purpose of promoting an insurrection. He detected all the contradictory accounts that had been given of these matchlock-men, and having shewn the complete fallacy attempted to be imposed on the credulity of the world in this instance, he asked why the younger son of the Bhow Begum had not been suspected of having any concern or interest in this rebellion? This particularly had been very thoroughly explained. Sir Elijah Impey had been asked whether this Prince had any wealth?—No, none—he was miserably poor, and was a pensioner—there

was the solution of the difficulty. There never was in the mind of Mr. Hastings a suspicion of *treason* where there was not *treasure*. Penury was a complete and satisfactory proof that he could not be disaffected—opulence on the contrary was a manifest indication of disloyalty. Mr. Hastings, in his political sagacity, took the converse of the doctrine that the experience of history had established; that opulence and wealth, as they attached a man to the country where they lay, made him cautious and circumspect how he hazarded any enterprize that might draw on himself the jealousy of Government. Poverty on the other hand made a man giddy and desperate; having no permanent stake, he was easily seduced into commotion. Mr. Hastings, on the contrary, never failed to find a convincing and self-evident proof of attachment in penury, and an unanswerable evidence of rebellion in wealth.

In enumerating the various strong instances of the steady friendship and good disposition of the Begums to the English interests, Mr. Sheridan particularly animadverted on the representation they had made in favour of Captain —, whose life they had saved at the very moment when, if they had meant to strike any blow against the English interests, the blow would have been felt. —This Gentleman, whose Life the Bhow Begum

had saved, and who in the first and natural feelings of the soul, had repeatedly poured forth his grateful acknowledgments of the obligation, had afterwards been made the instrument of the destruction of his saviour. It had been asked why the Managers had not called Captain —— to the bar.—Why call him to the bar?—He never hoped to see him at the bar till he came there with fervent contrition and penitentiary zeal, to make atonement to the Princess, who was to him his second creator, and whom, with the breath of life, the gift of the Begum, he had accused; and in the presence of their common God, had solemnly poured forth a part of that breath in an affidavit, by which her ruin was to be accomplished! He would not believe it possible, that after having repeatedly acknowledged that he owed his life and liberty to the beneficent hand of this Lady, he could so far forget all that he owed, as of his own mere motion to come forward and make this affidavit. His knowledge of human feelings would not permit him to believe that it could be possible for any human creature to be guilty of an act so atrocious.—He must imagine that the Gentleman had been deluded and imposed upon—that he had been falsely and scandalously deceived—and that at the moment when he made that affidavit, he was ignorant of the use to which it was

to be applied.—He hoped, and trusted, that seeing that he was made the instrument of the ruin, and overthrow of his benefactress, he would come forward and state the imposition that had been practised upon him—for he could not be persuaded that any human creature could be capable of standing up in the presence of God, and exclaiming—To this woman I owe my life, and my gratitude shall be her destruction.

Mr. Sheridan continued in a strain of eloquence more lofty and commanding than any thing we ever heard, to state the circumstance of the book, the leaves of which were torn out, and which was mutilated for the purpose of concealment. After stating all the circumstances of this fact, and the manner in which the fact had been accounted for, he called it a black perjury. —Then rising in his eloquence to a flight beyond our power to trace him, he said, that these letters, though thus torn and mangled, were brought to light.—That power which gives to the arms of infant innocence the strength of Hercules—which controls the mighty, and abashes the confident—which gives to truth persuasion beyond the reach of eloquence—the look that appalls—the supplicating tear that softens—the tone tender, but confirmed, which at once soothes and convinces the soul—that power, which in all

the turns and windings of hypocritical and impudent falsehood ever ranges on the side of simple and unobtruding truth, leads the mind through all the mazes of craft and wickedness, with which this mysterious villany is covered, and arousing all the indignation of justice, points its punishment, Heaven-directed, to the head of the detested but unrepenting author.

Mr. Sheridan proceeded to shew in how many instances, and at what critical times the sincere friendship of the Begums had distinguished itself, and been exerted in our favour. In that critical moment, when after the affair of Captain Gordon, the interests of Mr. Hastings were, according to his own account, almost desperate; during the whole time, from the 22d of August to the 22d of September, when with a prodigality of truth he truly confessed that the situation of himself and his small party was desperate;—when the hoarded vengeance of Heaven was about to burst, and seemed to wait only for the completion of his guilt in the attempt on Cheit Sing, to break on his head, and precipitate him to ruin—what did they do? Instead of seizing on the crisis to carry into effect any scheme they might have engendered against him—instead of accomplishing his overthrow, which with their aid would at that moment have been certain, these women, with a

nobleness worthy of the sex, though ill applied as to the object, came forward to share in, not to contribute to his fall.

So much as to the first head of charge against the Begums.—The second charge, that of their assisting the Jaghiredars, he should say but little on. We learned in February 1782, of the Begums having countenanced the resistance.—True—And they now gave this presumed countenance discovered in February 1782, as a reason which operated to the ruin of the Princesses in November 1781. He took notice also of the curious circumstance of Mr. Middleton's sending back the troops at the desire of the Nabob; but stating that having done so, the Nabob must pay an extraordinary price in future, as these troops might be employed against his own Aumeels.

He now came to the third charge, said to be established by those affidavits.—That the Begums had been the principal movers of all the commotions in Oude; and here he confessed he thought there was such a body of damning evidence as required only to be stated, and which would render all elucidation unnecessary. The commotions in Oude were simply and solely to be attributed to the English gentlemen. The Nabob's description of their rapacity and violence was itself a full extention of all that was now to be attributed to the poor old women. He

gave a very particular account of their depredations. They had but one argument, consisting of two words. They wanted all the money that could possibly be raised in the country, by violence, by extortion, by rapine, or by stealth, but for two purposes, to pay the army, and fee the administration of Justice. He stated the various steps which had been taken by the Nabob, to deliver his devoted country from their violence, and particularly from the vulture grasp of Colonel Hannay, until at length, as Major Naylor wrote, a gentleman, whose soul possessed the qualities of his species, "the inhabitants, whose meek natures no irritation had been theretofore able to provoke, were at length goaded into tumult; and in their despair, that meekness, that yielding, and womanish softness which characterized every action, changed to a persevering obstinacy that was not to be subdued."—So that on the banks of the Ganges where the insurrection happened, the routed would not fly, the wounded would not suffer themselves to be cured.—Here again we had opened to us another vein of the richest and purest eloquence, and which in daring to touch, we are sensible we shall debase.

If, exclaims Mr. Sheridan, a stranger had at this time (in 1782) gone into the kingdom of Oude, ignorant of what had happened since the death of Sujah Dowlah, that man who with a savage

heart had still great lines of character, and who with all his ferocity in war, had still with a cultivating hand preserved to his country the riches which it derived from benignant skies, and a prolific soil—if this stranger, ignorant of all that had happened in the short interval, and observing the wide and general devastation, and all the horrors of the scene—of plains unclothed and brown—of vegetation burnt up and extinguished—of villages depopulated and in ruin—of temples unroofed and perishing—of reservoirs broken down and dry—he would naturally enquire, what war has thus laid waste the fertile fields of this once beautiful and opulent country—what civil dissensions have happened thus to tear asunder, and separate the happy societies that once possessed those villages—What disputed succession—What religious rage has, with unholy violence, demolished those temples, and disturbed fervent but unobtruding piety, in the exercise of its duties—What merciless enemy has thus spread the horrors of fire and sword—What severe visitation of Providence has thus dried up the fountains, and taken from the face of the earth every vestige of green?—Or rather, what monsters have stalked over the country, tainting and poisoning with pestiferous breath, what the voracious appetite could not devour?—To such questions, what must be the answer? No wars have ravaged these lands

and depopulated these villages—No civil discords have been felt—No disputed succession—No religious rage—No merciless enemy—No affliction of Providence, which, while it scourged for the moment, cut off the sources of resuscitation—No voracious and poisoning monsters—No—All this has been accomplished by the *friendship, generosity, and kindness* of the English nation—They have embraced us with their protecting arms—and, lo, these are the fruits of their alliance. What then, shall we be told, that under such circumstances, the exasperated feelings of a whole people, thus goaded and spurred on to clamour and resistance, were excited by the poor and feeble influence of the Begums! When we hear from Capt. Naylor the description that he gives of the paroxysm, fever, and delirium, into which despair had thrown the natives, when on the banks of the polluted Ganges, panting for death, they tore more widely open the lips of their gaping wounds, to accelerate their dissolution, and while their blood was issuing, presented their ghastly eyes to Heaven, breathing their last and fervent prayer that the dry earth might not be suffered to drink their blood, but that it might rise up to the throne of God, and rouse the eternal Providence to avenge the wrongs of their country. Will it be said that all this was brought about by the incantations of these Begums in their secluded

Zenana? or that they could inspire this enthusiasm and this despair into the breasts of a people who felt no grievance, and had suffered no torture? What motive then could have such influence in their bosoms? What motive! That which Nature, the common parent, plants in the bosom of man, and which, though it may be less active in the Indian than in the Englishman, is still congenial with, and makes a part of his being.—That feeling which tells him, that man was never made to be the property of man; but that when in the pride and insolence of power, one human creature dares to tyrannize over another, it is a power usurped, and resistance is a duty.—That feeling which tells him that all power is delegated for the good, not for the injury of the people, and that when it is converted from the original purpose, the compact is broken, and the power is to be resumed.—That principle which tells him that resistance to power usurped is not merely a duty which he owes to himself, and to his neighbour, but a duty which he owes to his God in asserting and maintaining the rank which he gave him in his creation!—To that common God, who, where he gives the *form* of *man*, whatever may be the complexion, gives also the *feelings* and the *rights* of *man*.—That principle, which neither the rudeness of ignorance can stifle, nor the enervation of refinement extinguish!—That principle

which makes it base for a man to suffer when he ought to act; which tending to preserve to the species the original designations of Providence, spurns at the arrogant distinctions of man, and vindicates the independent quality of his race.

Mr. Sheridan, after this, proceeded to say, that he thought an attentive perusal of all the circumstances, as he had endeavoured to exhibit them to the view of their Lordships, would satisfy them of the innocence of the Begums. But he was sensible that the proof of their innocence carried with it no conclusive proof of the guilt of the prisoner; and this was the next object of his speech. In a close chain of argument, he proved that the rebellion was not projected — was not even in the imagination of Mr. Hastings, until their ruin had been determined; that the rebellion was an after-thought, and was taken up as a means of justification, in the consciousness that justification was necessary. To prove this, he shewed, that he never wrote to the Council until the month of February; that though he wrote letters to Mr. Wheeler, and though, in his famous narrative, he called the God of Truth to witness that he had made no concealment, he concealed every particle, both of the rebellion and of the plunder, until he had been able to make up the body of rant and craft, rhapsody and enigma, which he produced under the title of “A Narrative of the Transactions.”

He shewed, that his pretended reasons for the concealment of five months, were direct fallacies; and having taken pains to elucidate these points, he said, that it had been a practice with Mr. Hastings to hold himself out as a preternatural being, gifted with good fortune, or else the peculiar favourite of Heaven, and that Providence never failed to take up and carry, by wise but hidden means, every project of his to its destined end. In this blasphemous way did the prisoner at the bar libel the course of Providence. Thus, according to him, when his corruptions and bribes were on the eve of exposure, Providence inspired the heart of Nundcomar to commit a low base crime, in order to save Mr. Hastings from ruin. Thus also, when in his attempts on Cheyt Sing, and his plunder of the Begums, Providence stepped in, and inspired the one with resistance, and the other with rebellion, to forward his purposes. Thus did he arrogantly hold himself forth as a man, not only the favourite of Providence, but as one for whose sake Providence departed from the eternal course of its own wise dispensations. Thus did he presume to say, that he was honoured and assisted in the administration of office by inspired felonies, heaven-born armies, and providential treasons! arraigning that Providence whose works are goodness, and whose ways are right.

It seemed, through the whole of his defence upon this charge, that Mr. Hastings, sensible that truth would undo him, thought that falsehood of any nature would serve his turn. In this view he had drawn together a set of falsehoods, without consistency, and without connection, not knowing, or not remembering, that there is nothing which requires so much care in the fabrication as a system of lies. The series must be regular and unbroken; but his falsehoods were eternally at variance, and demolished one another. Indeed, in all his conduct he seemed to be actuated but by one principle—to do things contrary to the established form. This architecture militated against the first principles of the art. He begun with the frieze and the capital, and laid the base of the column at the top. Thus having his house turned up-side down, he plumed himself on the novelty of his idea, till it came tumbling about his ears. His fortification was equal to his architecture. He raised a rampart on a spot which the enemy might command: he meant to surround himself with a fosse, but left an opening for the assailant. He built on a precipice, and camped on a mine.

Perhaps it might be said, that that guilt could not be great, where the veil with which it was covered was so thin. He was not of this opinion. His honourable and exalted friend, who had

opened generally to their Lordships the articles of Impeachment—A *gentleman*, to whom I look up with homage!—whose genius is commensurate to his philanthropy—whose memory will stretch itself beyond the fleeting objects of any little partial shuffling, through the whole wide range of human knowledge, and honourable aspiration after human good ; as large as the system which forms life ; as lasting as these objects that adorn it.—His honourable friend had said, in opening the charges, “ that there was something in the nature and conformation of vice, which made it inconsistent with prudence.” He could not agree implicitly with his honourable friend in this sentiment. If the true definition of prudence were the discreet management and conduct of a purpose to its successful end, he thought he could imagine to himself instances in which this species of prudence might be discovered in minds distinguished by the atrocity of their acts. When he observed the actions of a Philip of Macedon,—of a Cæsar,—of a Cromwell,—he could perceive great guilt successfully conducted to its end, it not by legitimate prudence, at least by consummate craft. It was therefore his opinion, that the doctrine of his honourable friend, held true only in those minds which could not be satisfied with the indulgence of a single crime ; where, instead

of one base master-passion having a complete sway, to which all the faculties were subject; and on which alone the mind was bent, there was a combustion and rivalry among a number of bad passions; where pride, vanity, avarice, lust of power, cruelty, and so forth, all at once actuated the human soul, and distracted its functions,—all of them clamouring for destruction, and each in its own barbarous jargon preferring its claim,—all dissonant and tumultuous,—all of them struggling for pre-eminence, and each counteracting the other. In such a mind, undoubtedly, great crimes could never be accompanied by prudence. There was a fortunate disability, occasioned by the contention, that rescued the human species from the villany of the intention. Such was the original denunciation of Nature.—Not so was it with the pure passions: in the breast where they resided, the harmony was never interrupted by the number; a perfect and substantial agreement gave an accession of vigour to each, and spreading their influence in every direction, like the divine intelligence and benignity from which they flowed, all of them filling their several spaces, some in their larger, some in their more contracted orbits, moving by sweet consent in their allotted place,—they secured true glory and happiness to the individual by whom they were possessed, and

extended it to the community of which he was a member.

Mr. Sheridan was then proceeding to shew, that the Nabob had violated the covenant of Nature, in rising up against his mother ; but that to this shameless outrage he was driven by the tyranny of the prisoner, who, as he had before said, had made him a *slave*, to compel him to become—a *monster* !

[*Adjourned to Tuesday.*]

TUESDAY, JUNE THE 10th.

MR. SHERIDAN began without any other preface than this—That, relying on the indulgence with which he had been hitherto so largely honoured, he would resume his speech, he said, where he had stopped on the preceding day, without taking up any of their Lordships' time in preliminary matter. He had left off with that part of the body of evidence which proved the abject state of vassalage in which the Nabob was

held, and by which it was, in his opinion, rendered manifest, that every act of his, particularly those strong acts in which he violated every obligation of a son, were done, not merely at the instigation, but absolutely at the command of the prisoner. It would not be difficult to prove, that if he had been independent, he certainly would not have committed those acts, and this he should be able to demonstrate to their Lordships. But first he begged leave to say, that in the perpetration of those shameful and atrocious crimes which made the subject of the present charge, there were three principal, and three subordinate actors. The three principal, or rather the one great and leading principal, with his two chief coadjutors, were Mr. Hastings, Mr. Middleton, and Sir Elijah Impey. The three subordinate actors were Colonel Hannay, Hyder Beg Cawn, and Ali Abram Cawn. Before he proceeded to shew that every one of the acts were forcibly imposed on the Nabob, he made some observations on part of the evidence of Sir Elijah Impey. He had given as a reason for not having at any time after he took the affidavits, conversed with Mr. Hastings on the subject to which they alluded, that he quitted Chunar the next day, and that therefore he had not had an opportunity of seeing, in order to converse with him on that or any subject. Mr. Sheridan shewed, from letters written by Sir

Elijah and Mr. Hastings, that they had quitted Chunar in company, and had continued together for some time. Sir Elijah had stated also, that he had delivered the affidavits into the hands of Mr. Hastings, and knew nothing of them afterwards. Mr. Sheridan shewed, that Major Davie had received the Persian affidavits from Sir Elijah to translate on the 12th of December, although Sir Elijah had said that he gave them to Mr. Hastings previous to his quitting Chunar, which was on the 1st of December. Mr. Sheridan said, he took notice of these facts, just to shew the respect that was to be paid to the testimony of Sir Elijah.

With regard to the affidavits as a body of evidence, the whole was mere hearsay and rumour. Captain Scott, who, by being in the country where the scene of the rebellion was said to lie, had had a good opportunity of knowing the facts, was not examined ; and the testimony of Hoolas Roy, who of all others was the best informed on the subject, was suppressed. That his affidavit was taken was manifest, and he called on the prisoner to say where this affidavit was concealed, and why it was withheld. Mr. Sheridan said, that in the celebrated letter written by Mr. Hastings, dated the 19th of December, his own knowledge of the transactions was the most confused and contradictory that could be imagined. He

enumerated the various contradictions of that letter.—He said, that Mr. Hastings had made a number of curious assertions in regard to the plunder of the treasures, and resumption of the jaghīres.—The proposition was first made to him, that the treasures should be taken as an alternative for the jaghires, but in making that proposition, it was said, that they belonged of right to the Nabob.—Mr. Hastings took it in the first sense, as he called it; that was, he determined to seize on the treasures, not as an alternative for the jaghires, but to take them first, because the proposition was made, and to take the jaghires afterwards. He was very anxious to have it believed, that the proposition came from the Nabob, although, by the whole tenour of Mr. Middleton's letters, confidential as well as public, it was demonstrated with what difficulty they were able to extort from him his consent to the violence. Mr. Sheridan adverted to the curious letter written by Mr. Hastings to Mr. Middleton and Mr. Johnson, saying, that the treaty made by him with the Nabob at Chunar, from its favourable tendency, had given rise to suspicions that money had been taken to procure it, and calling on them to exculpate themselves. Upon which, they with great formality declared on their honours, and before God, that they had neither received any bribe, nor had an idea of any; which

declaration, made with so much solemnity, satisfied Mr. Hastings; arising a little perhaps from the consciousness that he had the money in his pocket. Mr. Sheridan proceeded to shew, that so far from these acts being done at the instigation of the Nabob, it was with the utmost difficulty that they could receive from him a formal sanction—and on this subject several letters were read by Mr. Adam, and in particular he reconciled the letters written by Middleton on the 1st and 6th of December, by saying, that in regard to the seizure of the treasure of the Begums, he only required a hint from Mr. Hastings; but as the resumption of the jaghires was likely to be a service of danger, there was nothing less than a public order would satisfy Mr. Middleton. After arguing this point with dexterity, Mr. Sheridan came to the extraordinary letters of Mr. Middleton, dated on the 30th of December, wherein they are intended for the confidential and private use of Mr. Hastings; he denied the truth of what he had said in his public dispatch, which was to be submitted to the Council, and saying at the same time, that if Mr. Hastings wished him to say any thing or to give any other colour to the proceedings, he was ready to do it. Mr. Sheridan, after placing this disgraceful subserviency in so glaring a point of view, requested Mr. Adam to read

other letters necessary to illustrate this part of the charge, and to shew the anxious pains and sollicitude of Mr. Hastings to establish something like an excuse for the turpitude of his conduct.

* * * While these letters were reading, Mr. Sheridan, who was seized with a sudden, though slight indisposition, retired to the Managers' room. He was, after some refreshment, desirous of proceeding; but his friends persuaded him to the contrary; and Mr. Fox came into the Court, and said, that Mr. Sheridan being by his indisposition prevented from doing that justice to the charge, which it was his wish to do, the Managers requested, that their Lordships would be pleased to adjourn, and appoint another day on which he might proceed.

Their Lordships accordingly withdrew, and sent a message to the House of Commons, that the Court will sit again on Friday the 13th.

FRIDAY, JUNE THE 13th, 1788.

MR. SHERIDAN rose, and being in a great measure recovered from the indisposition which prevented him from proceeding on Tuesday, resumed his speech, by thanking their Lordships for the indulgence they had shewn him, and assured them that nothing but positive inability to proceed, on Tuesday, in a manner worthy of the importance, and the dignity of his cause, could have induced him to give them the trouble of sitting another day.

He then reminded their Lordships, that in commenting on the evidence respecting the resumption of the jaghires, and the plunder of the Begums, he had left off with the public and private correspondence between Mr. Hastings and Mr. Middleton. This correspondence demanded the most minute attention, for it contained all the facts of that foul and unmanly conspiracy; it contained a true account of the cause of that conspiracy, and also the quibbles, the tricks, the mean shifts and evasions, by which it had been attempted to conceal it.

On the public correspondence, as contrasted with the private, he animadverted with the most

penetrating acuteness ; and exposed the gross contradictions, the laboured fallacies, and studied misrepresentations that pervaded the whole.—Their Lordships would naturally enquire with some degree of surprise, how the private letters that were thus to establish the guilt of their authors had come to light.—In the middle of December, 1782, a coldness had taken place between Mr. Hastings and Mr. Middleton. Mr. Hastings had been hurt at the tardiness with which Middleton proceeded, and had charged him with the heinous offence of permitting two days forbearance from the Nabob to his mother.—From this moment shyness and suspicion between the principal and the agent took place. Mr. Middleton hesitated about the expediency of the measure, and began to doubt whether the advantage would be equal to the risk. Mr. Hastings, whether he apprehended that Middleton was retarded by any return of humanity or sentiments of justice, by any secret combination with the Begum and her son, or a wish to take the lion's share of the plunder to himself, was incensed at the delay. Mr. Middleton represented the unwillingness of the Nabob to put in execution the resumption of the jaghires ; the low state of his finances ; that his troops were mutinous for want of pay ; and that his life had been in danger from an insurrection among them. That

in this moment of distress he had offered one hundred thousand pounds, in addition to a like sum paid before, as an equivalent for the resumption which was demanded of him. Of this offer, however, it appeared the Nabob knew nothing. In conferring an obligation, it was sometimes contrived, from motives of delicacy, that the name of the donor should be concealed from the person obliged; but here was delicacy of a new sort—the person conferring the favour was to be kept ignorant that he had conferred it. Yet, after the return of Middleton in 1783, there was the same friendly collusion, the same fraudulent familiarity, between him and Mr. Hastings, that had existed before this difference took place. He was brought down in December, 1782, and no charge was brought against him till April following. Then it was that Mr. Hastings, in a sudden fit of justice, preferred the charge against him, and threw down his letters on the Council-table. Whatever was the meaning of this charge, whether it was a juggle to elude enquiry, or whether it was intended to make an impression at Fyzabad; whether Mr. Hastings drew up the charge, and instructed Mr. Middleton to draw up an easy defence; or whether Middleton drew up the charge, and Mr. Hastings the defence, there appeared in the whole transaction the same habitual collusion in which they lived—and it ended in a rhapsody,

a repartee, and a poetical quotation. By this act of providential folly, the private letters were produced, and the production of them was conclusive proof of the conspiracy. The private letters were the only part of the correspondence to be looked to. They were written in the confidence of private communication, without any of the motives to palliate and colour facts, to confound and mislead the judgment, which appeared on the very face of the public correspondence.

Mr. Sheridan then referred to a letter from Lucknow, written under such particular circumstances, and at such a particular period, that had the alleged rebellion of the Begums ever existed, but in imagination, it must have been mentioned in that letter. Where then was the proof of the rebellion? Not where it ought naturally to be found, but in the affidavits collected by Sir Elijah Impey—in the fabricated public correspondence between him, Mr. Hastings, and Mr. Middleton. In that letter there was no mention of rebellion. It was indeed said, that if such measures were rigorously pursued as had been set on foot, the people might be driven from murmurs to resistance, and rise up in arms against their oppressors. Then indeed a little providential slaughter would substantiate the rebellion which they wished to find, and afford a pretext for premeditated plunder. But there was a clumsiness

in the fraud, a coarseness in the execution which defeated its purpose, and exposed it to detection.

He animadverted with much severity on the conduct of Sir Elijah Impey, in collecting the affidavits. At one moment he appeared in Oude, at another in Chunar, at a third in Benares, collecting affidavits. The gravity of his business, and the vivacity, the rapidity, the celerity of his movements, made a singular contrast. To him might have been applied the words of Hamlet to the ghost, "What, True-penny! are you there?" Like the ghost he was heard in every quarter crying aloud, *swear!* But the similitude went no farther; he was never heard to give the injunction,

"Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive

"Against thy mother aught."

In the memorable private letter from Mr. Middleton of the 28th of December, 1781, in which he acknowledged the receipt of a private letter from Mr. Hastings, although no private letters from the prisoner had been produced—a circumstance which could only be accounted for, and arise from the habitual awe in which Middleton was kept by the domineering power and fascinating influence of his master. In this letter, Middleton told him, that in the present fermented state of the country, the resumption could not

be accomplished but with infinite hazard—At the same time Mr. Johnson wrote him to the same purpose. The words of his letter were memorable. He thought it would require a *campaign* to carry into execution the orders for the resumption of the Jaghires. A campaign against whom! Against the officers and army of their ally, the Nabob, who had given the order. This resumption was stated to be for his good, and for the good of his country, and it was only to be accomplished by a campaign. Such was the manner in which the English, under the auspices of Mr. Hastings, protected their allies in India. The protection of the English was the misery and ruin of the protected. It was the protection of the vulture to the lamb, which covers while it devours its prey—which stretching its baleful pinions, and hovering in mid air, disperses the kites and lesser birds of prey, and saves the innocent and helpless victim from all talons but its own.

It was curious to remark, that in the correspondence of these creatures of Mr. Hastings, and in their earnest endeavours to dissuade him from the resumption of the Jaghires, not a word is mentioned of the measure being contrary to honour, to faith, derogatory to national character, unmanly or unprincipled.—No such thing—They knew the man to whom they were writing, and

their only arguments were, that it was contrary to policy, to expediency—and that the event was not likely to prosper in the only way in which it could be worth the attempt—in the accumulation of money. Not one word did they mention of the just claims which the Nabob had to the gratitude and friendship of the English—Not one syllable of the treaty by which we were bound to protect him—Not one syllable of the relation which subsisted between him and the ladies they were about to plunder—Not one syllable was hinted about justice or mercy—Nothing was ever addressed to him but the apprehension that the money to be procured would not be worth the danger and labour, with which it must be attended. Such was the source and origin of all his actions, and it was that base and profligate motive, that urging him to every species of meanness and of cruelty, did give such a stamp and impression to his acts as made them unparalleled in ancient or modern history. He would be bold to say, that nothing could be found in the history of human turpitude, nothing in the nervous delineations and penetrating brevity of Tacitus, nothing in the luminous and luxuriant pages of Gibbon, or of any other historian, dead or living, who, searching into measures and characters with the rigour of truth, presented to our abhorrence depravity in its blackest shapes,

could equal, in the grossness of the guilt, in the hardness of heart with which it was conducted, or in the low and groveling motive, the acts and character of Mr. Hastings—He, who in the base desire of stripping two helpless women, could stir the son to rise up in vengeance against them—who when that son had certain touches of nature in his breast—certain feelings of an awakened conscience to indicate that he was a man—accused that son of entertaining peevish objections to the plunder and sacrifice of his mother—Who having destroyed in his bosom all thought—all reflection—all memory—all conscience—all tenderness and duty as a son—all dignity as a monarch—having destroyed his character, and depopulated his country, at length brought him to violate the dearest ties of nature, and countenance the destruction of his parents—and who having thus debauched this poor and miserable instrument of his crimes to his purpose, deceived and ruined him in turn. He—this inhuman violator of all ties, sacred and profane, had in this single crime, he would be bold to say, no parallel nor prototype in the old world, or the new, from the day of original sin to the present hour.

And yet when in this climax he thought he had got to the summit and pinnacle of his guilt, he found something still more transcendently fla-

gitious. He particularly alluded to his famous letter, falsely dated the 16th of February, 1782, in which, at the very same moment that he had given the order for the entire destructions of the Begums, and for the resumption of the jaghires, he expressed to the Nabob the warm and lively interest which he took in his welfare—the sincerity and ardour of his friendship—and that though his presence was imminently wanted at Calcutta, he could not rest a moment without coming to the Nabob's assistance, and in the mean time, he had sent four regiments to his aid.—So deliberate and cool—so hypocritical and insinuating was the villany of this man! The heart was exasperated by the malignity of this arch treason—But at length the Nabob was on his guard—He could not be deceived by this mask—The offer of the four regiments developed the object of Mr. Hastings.—He perceived the dagger bunglingly concealed in the hand that was held out with a smile to meet him—and we accordingly heard no more from the Nabob of reliance on the friendship of Mr. Hastings.—This letter was sent at the very time when the troops had surrounded the walls of Fyzabad. And now began the scene of horrors, which, if he merely wished to rouse their Lordships' feelings, he should only have occasion minutely to describe. To state the violence committed on that palace, which the piety of the

kingdom had raised for the retreat and seclusion of the objects of its pride and veneration. He thought he saw innocence reposing in those shades, rendered sacred by superstition. Venerable age and helpless infancy here found an asylum, and to the violation of this scene was sent—an Impey to invigorate the flagging conscience of a Middleton;—and an Ali Khan assisted by the stouter villany of a Hyder Beg. Rapine, outrage, and violence followed in the train, while Hastings, though standing aloof, was in fact the master-general of the war, and through the whole of the dreadful scene of horror their Lordships saw him—“ride in the whirlwind, and direct the storm.”

He now with an admirable accuracy and force of reasoning went over the correspondence, which then passed between Middleton and the Begums; he particularly alluded to the letter sent by the Begum to Middleton, with his answer, in which he declared himself equally the friend of the Nabob and the Begum, although he had previously sworn in the presence of God, that he thought she had hostile designs against her son and the English, and had made up his conscience to strip her of every thing she possessed. He execrated the shameless sycophancy of this conduct, that like some of the monsters of India, cringed to its prey, and fawned on the objects of

its vengeance. In going over these private letters, he came to that from Mr. Middleton, which the Council for the prisoner had been anxious to have read to the end, in order to publish an anecdote which they thought would do something towards supporting the character of Mr. Middleton. It contained some expressions of earnest and anxious solicitude for the recovery of a beloved son—and which they meant to insinuate, were indications of feeling, and of his sense of the nature of the relative duty and affection which subsisted between the parent and the child. How fortunate they had been in their desire of having this anecdote heard, he knew not—He confessed he thought it did not tend to raise the character of Mr. Middleton—but on the contrary, it operated very much to his prejudice. It would not be imputed to him, that speaking abstractedly, he considered the trait of parental tenderness as a degrading feature in the human heart. Their Lordships knew well the force of the soft and endearing relation which subsisted between parent and child; but surely it would not be said, that the circumstance brought to their Lordships' view by the Counsel, of the fact of Mr. Middleton's having this sentiment and feeling in his bosom, was therefore intitled to commendation, when with the feeling in his own bosom he was outraging it in others. Was it not

an aggravation of his guilt, that he who felt the ardent solicitude of a parent, and who consequently must be sensible of the reciprocal feelings of a child, could bring himself to tear asunder, and to violate all those dear and sacred bonds! Did it not enhance his guilt, that his cruelty was not the result of ideotic ignorance, or of savage barbarity?—That he whose soul was thus sensible to the impressions of tenderness and love, should be so abandoned as to sacrifice those feelings to the inhuman will of the tyrant whom he served. He averred that it increased and magnified his guilt. He would have been less criminal had he been insensible of tenderness—less criminal if he had not been so thoroughly acquainted with the true quality of parental love and filial duty. [Here Mr. Sheridan gave a picture of filial duty, which, as a piece of chaste and beautiful painting in language, we know not where to equal, and which we are utterly unable to copy.]

Filial duty, he said, it was impossible by words to describe, but description by words was unnecessary. It was that duty which they all felt and understood, and which required not the powers of language to explain. It was in truth more properly to be called a principle than a duty. It required not the aid of memory—it needed not the exercise of the understanding—it awaited not

the slow deliberations of reasoning.—It flowed spontaneously from the fountain of our feelings.—It was involuntary in our nature.—It was a quality of our being, innate, and coeval with life, which though afterwards cherished as a passion was independent of our mental powers.—It was earlier than all intelligence in our souls.—It displayed itself in the earliest impulses of the heart, and was an emotion of fondness that returned in smiles of gratitude the affectionate solitudes—the tender anxieties—the endearing attentions experienced before memory began, but which were not less dear for not being remembered.—It was the sacrament of nature in our hearts, by which the union of parent and child was sealed and rendered perfect in the community of love, and which, strengthening and ripening with life, acquired vigour from the understanding, and was most lively and active when most wanted—when those who had supported infancy were sinking into age, and when infirmity and decrepitude found their best solace in the affections of the children they had reared—But he was ashamed to take up so much of their Lordships time in attempting to give a cold picture of filial duty, when he saw so many breathing testimonies in the assembly that surrounded him—and when he saw every feature of that assembly beaming and

erecting itself in confession of the universal principle.

The manner of disposing of the goods violently seized from the unfortunate Princesses, their jewels, their wearing apparel, their furniture, even to their table utensils; though insignificant objects when compared with other circumstances of their unhappy situation, was marked with injustice and oppression.—They were sold, or at least put up to sale, by auction—a pretended sale, where there were no bidders, who had not previously agreed on what they should purchase, and how much they should pay for dividing the spoil. This the Begum herself lamented in very affecting terms, in a representation to Mr. Middleton, when she says, that she finds, from woful experience, that even bullion, gold, and jewels, lose their value the moment it is known they come from her. But the rapacity of Middleton did not stop there, for after having thus fraudulently disposed of the goods, a new claim was made for the deficiency, and new cruelties were perpetrated to enforce the payment of a sum, which did not constitute a part of the original fine. Attempts were made to find out new crimes and new debts due by the Nabob to the Company, though he had already offended to the amount of 600,000*l*. Mr. Hastings writes to Mr. Middleton not to come to a

final settlement with the Nabob, till he should consult his CASH-BOOK, which was the faithful record of the crimes of their allies, and in which he had already discovered 200,000*l.* worth of treason, that no person had ever before dreamed of. He accuses by the *Multiplication Table*, tries by the *Rule of Three*, and condemns, not by the sublime institute of Timur, or the simple maxims of English jurisprudence, but by the unerring rule of *Cocker's Arithmetic*.—He then proceeded to animadvert on the testimony of Major Scott, whom he called the incomparable agent of Mr. Hastings. He had come to the bar, and said, that though the Defence of Mr. Hastings had not been drawn up by himself, yet there was one paragraph which he (Mr. Hastings) had written with his own *proper* hand. That paragraph was avowing the resumption of the Jaghires, and averring it to be consistent with the dictates of humanity, policy, and justice. “Give me the pen,” said Mr. Hastings; “I will defend the measure as just and necessary. Do you find *memory*, I will find *character*!” And thus the *twin warriors* came into the field, each in his proper sphere of action, and armed for either purpose. Such had been the daring and unblushing defence of Mr. Hastings, for the commission of an act, on which their Lordships could have but one opinion. That it was not consistent with the dictates of justice,

he appealed to those whose peculiar province it was to administer justice. Those of your Lordships, said he, who have been distinguished as Statesmen, would spurn at the idea of its being a measure that can be justified on the principles of good policy; and that it is not to be defended by the laws of humanity, he would appeal to that venerable part of the august tribunal who heard him—they who had ever proved themselves the distinguished advocates of religion and truth.

He now came to the recital of the cruelties perpetrated by the agents of Mr. Hastings, which he pledged himself to bring home to the bold culprit at the bar. The first act of their tyranny was the imprisonment of the Ministers of the Begums, who were persons of considerable eminence and distinction in that country, and who had enjoyed much of the confidence and favour of the late Nabob. Not satisfied with this, they were loaded with irons, and suffered the combined horrors of want, imprisonment, and ignominy: but what aggravated the scandalous injustice of this measure was, that they had suffered without even the formality of an inquiry, while that *arch traitor*, Shumshaw Cawu, though accused of disaffection to the English Government, was suffered to go about without notice; he had been so much neglected by those in power, that he had not

even been complimented with *fetters*, the usual badge of distinction, which it was the practice to bestow on opulent traitors.—To his poverty he owed his protection.—The unfortunate Ministers of the Begums not having yet satisfied the rapacity of these plunderers, were ordered to Chunar, where the English flag was flying as the signal of oppression, there to have corporal punishment inflicted on them, and one of them actually suffered it, to the disgrace of the honour, the justice, and humanity of the British nation. What must have been the feelings of the British officers upon that occasion, he must leave those to say who were present. To Major Gilpin he gave much praise, not only for the candid evidence he gave at the bar, but for his humane endeavour to alleviate the sufferings of the unhappy women, for they were the next objects of Mr. Middleton's *humanity*. The conduct of Mr. Johnson was of a different kind, though he certainly had some claim to praise from his *forbearance*—he very *humanely* writes to Middleton, that he did not think it would be *worth while* to put to death 2000 women and children for the purpose of enforcing prompt payment of their demands; but actuated by the fear of the dreadful responsibility under which Mr. Hastings had placed all his agents, they proceeded to carry his orders into execution, and took possession of the Palace. The

sufferings of the women were pathetically described by Major Gilpin. In a letter dated the 30th October, 1782, he writes as follows :—"Last night, about eight o'clock, the women in the Khord Mohul, (Lesser Palace) or Zenana, (women's apartment under the charge of Latafut Ally Khan) assembled on the tops of the buildings, crying in the most lamentable manner for food ; that for the last four days they had got but a very scanty allowance, and that yesterday they had got none. The melancholy cries of famine are more easily imagined than described."—After such a description of calamity, he said, he would not trespass on the feelings of their Lordships by any comments on it. Their indignation against the author of those calamities, rendered any further observations on that subject unnecessary. It was now for him to prove, that Mr. Hastings was responsible for the actions of his agents. That he was responsible for the Treaty of Chunar, he believed, would scarcely be disputed—though Mr. Middleton had, on the last day of his examination, refused to answer some questions on that subject, lest it might criminate himself. With an avarice for infamy, and an anxious desire of monopolizing guilt, Mr. Middleton, when questioned about his conduct at Fyzabad, had answered, that he alone was to blame ; for Mr. Hastings had written an angry letter to him, disapproving of

of what he had done ; but what, said he, will be your Lordships' astonishment, when you are told that this letter from Mr. Hastings contained a gentle reproach to Mr. Middleton, not for the want of humanity, but for his lenity ! Such was his anxiety to court infamy, and to solicit guilt, that he scrupled not to encounter ignominy when he might have claimed praise !

Mr. Hastings had urged in his defence, that as he was not privy to the actions, he could not be responsible for the guilt. This was not true. Mr. Hastings well knew what was going forward, though, perhaps, he might be unacquainted with the miserable detail. When a person in authority desires another to do an illegal act, he certainly is, to all intents and purposes, answerable for the consequences. He becomes the principal in the crime, though he might not be the actual perpetrator of it, and is considered, by every principle of natural law and natural reason, as the first object of punishment. What were the orders given by Mr. Hastings ? They were peremptory—and it is proved by Middleton himself, that he could not have carried them into execution by any other means than those which had been adopted. Would any man then be hardy enough to assert, that Mr. Hastings was not in this instance answerable for the act of his agent ? The communications of Mr. Hastings

and Mr. Middleton had been frequent and uninterrupted: though he must say they were more like the secret machinations of a banditti in a cavern, plotting the destruction of some innocent family, than the deliberations of British Representatives in India.

Mr. Middleton, however, had at least some regard to decorum on particular occasions, for, in answer to Mr. Hastings's letter, accusing him of lenity and forbearance in the execution of his orders, he answers, " That the Nabob was *son* to the Begum whom we were to proceed against ; —a *son* against his mother must at least save *appearances* in his mode of proceeding." But Mr. Hastings all along pretends complete ignorance of the cruelties that were perpetrated, that is, he was ignorant of the exact number of lashes which were inflicted, and the precise weight of the iron which formed the fetters—Such was the miserable sophistry by which he defended himself, though his guilt was the same as if he had with his own hand inflicted the punishment.

He then took notice of that part of Mr. Hastings's defence, the object of which was to criminate the rest of the Board, or at least to prove that they were equally guilty with him. Had Sir John Macpherson then (of whose character he thought highly) no friend that would call him to the bar, to vindicate himself from so foul an

aspersion? Was there nobody to do justice to the memory of Mr. Wheeler? For his own part, he was ready to acquit the Members of the Board from any share in the guilt of the black catalogue of Mr. Hastings's crimes, though their agreeing to sign the Dispatch to the Court of Directors, not one paragraph of which was true, was a very inexcusable, and even a criminal credulity. After commenting with great ingenuity and force of reasoning on the different paragraphs of the letter to the Court of Directors, with a view to prove that the whole was a fabrication, calculated solely to promote the views of Mr. Hastings, he said, he was convinced that Sir John Macpherson was now ashamed of his credulity, and would be glad of an opportunity of vindicating himself from the imputed guilt, of which Mr. Hastings had been anxious to give to the Board more than fell to their share.

The tyranny of Mr. Hastings, he said, was not to be reconciled to the common rules, nor could it be judged of by the common standards of tyrants. The atrocious cruelties of a Nero and a Caligula might be ascribed to the impetuosity of passions inflamed to madness, which knew no check, and which felt no correction. In their delirious career, they suffered no reflection to intervene, and they knew of no responsibility—they had no interval of remorse, no feeling of

equality—they were born to rule, and they considered their subjects as creatures over whom they had a right to domineer. That such men, with turbulent, head-strong passions, should be tyrants, was not so wonderful as it was melancholy. But how different was the case of Mr. Hastings? He was a cool-thinking, deliberate tyrant. Born to no rule—entitled to no superiority—accustomed to converse, to act, and to live with his equals—bred in mercantile habits, which forced him to estimate on every measure—and entrusted by a mercantile Company with a government which was to be carried on by mercantile principles—Bound to give a faithful account of every transaction—and to expose not only the measure itself, but the motives that led to it—Who could never go to bed without discharging this duty—without balancing the transactions of the day—and reconciling his acts to justice and policy—Who held up, as it were, a glass rightly to his own conscience, and was bound to purge it—That such a man should become a tyrant, militated against every rational principle of man.—Yet here we saw the monster—a philosophical tyrant—a cool, deliberate, reasoning tyrant—who violated the rights of man, with a perfect consciousness of what those rights were—and who, endowed with the knowledge of the equal rank, as to freedom, granted by the

Deity to human kind, arraigned the wisdom of Providence, by opposing its dispensations in favour of its species. A tyrant against a man was a libeller of God—and the Court beheld in the prisoner a creature who had presumed to deface and disorder the beauty and harmony of that system which was originally granted by Heaven for the happiness of the earth.

Mr. Sheridan now drew to his conclusion. He said, their Lordships would not be surprized, if, after all that they had heard, he should think the cause for which he stood up perfectly safe, if he called on them to discharge from their minds all that they had heard of mere language, and only to attend to facts. A strict examination of the evidence would so fully and thoroughly convince them of the turpitude of the prisoner, that he wished to place the whole cause on that single ground, unornamented by eloquence, and unassisted by reasoning. One only passage more he should take notice of.—Mr. Hastings, in the moment when he stifled the pretended enquiry into the atrocious acts committed under his own authority, entered a minute of the most remarkable kind :—“ If we cannot heal, let us not inflame the wounds which have been inflicted. If the Begums think themselves aggrieved to such a degree as to justify them in an appeal to a foreign juris-

diction,"—speaking of wounds inflicted by his own positive orders—and talking of a foreign jurisdiction, as if Sir Elijah Impey's Court at Lucknow had not been a foreign jurisdiction,—“let us at least permit them to be the judges of their own feelings, and prefer their complaints before we offer to redress them.”—But now came the magnificent paragraph, to which he requested their Lordships attention:—“I hope I shall not depart from the simplicity of official language, in saying, the majesty of Justice ought to be approached with solicitation, not descend to provoke or invite it, much less to debase itself by the suggestion of wrongs, and the promise of redress, with the denunciation of punishments, before trial, and even before accusation.”—This strutting and pompous apology for not listening to the voice of real justice and mercy, he was very much surprised to find had met the approbation of Sir John Macpherson, of whose good sense and understanding he had heard a good report, but who, by the minute which he added, proved that he had not studied and corrected his taste for the sublime and beautiful from the immortal leader of this prosecution. If he had done so, he would have felt and treated this passage as it deserved—as a piece of bombastic jargon, unworthy of the sober approbation of the under-

standing. The Majesty of Justice, in the eyes of Mr. Hastings, was a being of terrific horror—a dreadful idol placed in the gloom of graves, accessible only to cringing supplication, and which must be approached with offerings, and worshiped by sacrifice. The majesty of Mr. Hastings was a being whose decrees were written with blood, and whose oracles were at once obscure and terrible.

From such an idol (exclaims Mr. Sheridan) I turn my eyes with horror—I turn them here to this dignified and high tribunal, where the Majesty of Justice really sits enthroned.—Here I perceive the Majesty of Justice in her proper robes of truth and mercy—chaste and simple—accessible and patient—awful without severity—inquisitive without meanness.—I see her enthroned and sitting in judgment on a great and momentous cause, in which the happiness of millions is involved.—Pardon me, my Lords, if I presume to say, that in the decision of this great cause you are to be envied, as well as venerated. You possess the highest distinction of the human character; for when you render your ultimate voice on this cause, illustrating the dignity of the ancestors from whom you spring—justifying the solemn asseveration which you make—viudicating the people of whom you are a part—and

manifesting the intelligence of the times in which you live—you will do such an act of mercy and blessing to man, as no men but yourselves are able to grant.

My Lords, I have done!

FINIS.

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